

## **NSC Alliance Washington Report, Volume 4, Issue 10, October 10, 2013**

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### **Policy News from NSC Alliance**

Through the NSC Alliance partnership with the American Institute of Biological Sciences, we are pleased to provide NSC Alliance members with the following public policy update. If you have any questions or require additional information regarding any of the following items, please contact NSC Alliance director of public policy Dr. Robert Gropp at 202-628-1500 x 250 or at [rgropp@aibs.org](mailto:rgropp@aibs.org).

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### **Government Shutdown Enters Second Week**

Most government offices have been closed for more than a week as the result of a congressional impasse over funding the Affordable Care Act (i.e. Obamacare). Conservative Republicans have sought to defund the law by adding riders to legislation that would provide fiscal year 2014 funding to keep the government open. Thus far, both chambers have agreed to an annual funding level of \$986 billion, which is higher than the limit set in the Budget Control Act.

Republicans in the House of Representatives are insisting on defunding the 2010 health care reform law as part of the must-pass spending bill. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and President Obama have thus far held firm to not negotiate on whether Congress should fund the federal government.

In recent weeks, the legislative process has resembled a game of ping-pong. The House passed a bill to fund the government and defund Obamacare, which the Senate amended to remove the provision on health care. That bill was sent back to the House, where it was amended again and sent back to the Senate. The process repeated several more times before time ran out and the new fiscal year started on 1 October.

Federal agencies began shutting down operations on the morning of 1 October. Subsequently, the House passed legislation that would ensure that federal employees are eventually paid for the time they have been furloughed. This legislation was passed after uniformed Secret Service and Capitol Police officers, working without pay, prevented a woman from ramming her vehicle onto

White House and Capitol grounds. Officers involved in the incident were injured trying to stop the vehicle.

Meanwhile, the House of Representatives has been pursuing an alternate approach: funding and reopening select agencies and departments. The National Institutes of Health and National Parks would have reopened under legislation passed by the House last week. Both bills were modified by Senate Democrats to fund the entire government until mid-November.

Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel recently announced that he was recalling federal civilian civil servants at the Department of Defense (DOD). The move came after DOD and the Justice Department interpreted a provision of a bill signed into law last week that guarantees uniformed military personnel are paid. According to news reports, DOD will recall roughly 300,000 civilians who contributed to the morale, well-being, and readiness of service members.

At the Environmental Protection Agency, about six percent of the workforce will continue working because they perform “essential duties” or because their salaries are paid for by sources other than annual appropriations.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) issued guidance that stated that awardees may continue work on all awards “to the extent that doing so will not require federal staff intervention and that funds are available....[N]o payments will be made during the funding hiatus.”

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, NSF, and others shuttered official websites due to the lapse in government funding. Other agencies notified users that their websites would not be updated until the government resumes business as usual.

Government agencies will remain closed until the House and Senate agree to a spending plan, which is increasingly looking to be more than a week off. News reports have speculated that a spending plan may come together with a proposal to address the nation’s debt ceiling. Current forecasts indicate that the country will hit its debt limit on 17 October. Many also believe that hard line Republicans will attempt to secure deep cuts to federal programs as well as repeal the health care reform law as part of any deal to address the debt ceiling.

### **Action Alert: Urge Your Elected Officials to Fund the Government**

Because Congress and the President have yet to reach an agreement that will fund the federal government, many government employees were furloughed beginning 1 October. Moreover, many government services, such as grant and contract administration at NSF and other funding agencies, also effectively stopped on 1 October.

Please take a moment to urge your federal elected officials to do their job. It is time for our elected officials to stop holding press conferences and passing pointless legislation. It is time for Congress to start governing and pass legislation that funds the federal government.

Take action at <http://capwiz.com/aibs/issues/alert/?alertid=62950966>.

## **Secretary of Smithsonian to Retire**

Dr. Wayne Clough announced last week that he will step down as Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution in October 2014. He will have served more than six years as head of the Institution. Previously, Clough served as president of the Georgia Institute of Technology.

“When I became Secretary in 2008, I believed strongly that the Smithsonian had enormous untapped potential, especially in digital technology, to reach millions of people and serve as a resource for those who cannot visit Washington,” Clough said. “I am confident that with our initiatives underway in bioconservation, education, digitization and fundraising, this is the right time to announce my plans for next fall so that an orderly transition can begin.”

The Smithsonian’s Board of Regents will form a search committee to identify Clough’s replacement.

## **USGS Coalition Honors Representatives Calvert, DeFazio**

On 17 September 2013, the USGS Coalition honored Representatives Ken Calvert (R-CA) and Peter DeFazio (D-OR) with the Coalition’s 2013 Leadership Award. The awards were presented during the USGS Coalition’s annual reception on Capitol Hill.

The NSC Alliance is a member of the USGS Coalition and NSC Alliance director of public policy Robert Gropp is chair of the group. In addition to remarks by both Representatives, two senior Interior officials spoke. Jennifer Gimbel is the counselor to the assistant secretary for water and science at the Department of the Interior. Suzette Kimball, acting director of the USGS, thanked the Representatives and the USGS Coalition for the years of effort they have given to elevating the profile of the USGS among policymakers.

“We are pleased to recognize Representatives Calvert and DeFazio for their efforts to champion the scientific programs of the United States Geological Survey. Their leadership in Congress has helped increase awareness of the USGS,” stated Dr. Gropp. “Representatives Calvert and DeFazio clearly understand that we all benefit every day from USGS science. The agency’s research and information contribute to economic growth, improve public health and safety, and enhance our ability to smartly manage our natural resources.”

Congressman Calvert is serving his eleventh term in the U.S. House of Representatives and represents Southern California’s 42nd Congressional District. He serves on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, which oversees funding for the USGS and other Department of Interior programs. As a member of the subcommittee, Calvert plays an important role in ensuring that the USGS has the resources it needs to provide the department and the nation with the scientific information required to make informed decisions. In addition, he focuses on creating long-term solutions for energy and water problems, both to California and the nation.

“I am honored to receive the USGS Coalition Leadership Award. The USGS continues to play an important role in providing the science and data used by natural disaster response organizations and other resource agencies,” stated Congressman Calvert.

Representative DeFazio is serving his fourteenth term in the U.S. House of Representatives, representing Oregon’s 4th Congressional District. He serves as the ranking member on the House Natural Resources Committee, which has jurisdiction over the USGS. DeFazio is committed to the responsible management of our nation’s natural resources and has been an outspoken voice for sustainable practices and economic security. In 2013, DeFazio urged House appropriators to support the Department of Interior Climate Science Centers, which provide fundamental scientific information, tools, and techniques for resource managers and other interested parties to anticipate, monitor, and adapt to climate change impacts.

“I am pleased to support the USGS and the work it does to provide reliable scientific data to increase our understanding of the natural environment and how to protect it,” declared Congressman DeFazio. “I am proud to accept this award, and as Ranking Member of the Natural Resources Committee, I will continue to further USGS’s mission to promote sound science for Oregon and for the Nation.”

### **Deadline Approaching for NSF Digitization Grants**

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is accepting proposals for the Advancing Digitization of Biodiversity Collections program. This initiative seeks to enhance and expand digital data documenting existing vouchered biological and paleontological collections. The deadline for full proposals is 18 October 2013, but FastLane is currently not operational because of the government shutdown.

According to the NSF website, “Grants.gov may be up and running, however, since FastLane will not be operating, proposal downloads from Grants.gov will not take place. Therefore proposals will not be checked for compliance with NSF proposal preparation requirements or processed until normal operations are allowed to resume.”

NSF states that once normal operations resume, the agency will issue guidance regarding any funding opportunities that have a deadline that occurred during the government shutdown.

### **New Game Encourages Learning Taxonomy**

The Encyclopedia of Life has created a new game for mobile phone users that mimics global exploration and the discovery of new species. Users explore species classification and develop an understanding of each species through descriptions, images, and the IUCN conservation status. The game is available on iTunes and Google Play.

## **Reminder: NSC Alliance Board Elections**

Elections for the NSC Alliance Board are now underway. If you are the designated representative for your organization, please cast your vote by 5 pm (EDT) on Friday, 11 October 2013. If you require assistance casting your vote, please contact [membership@nscalliance.org](mailto:membership@nscalliance.org).

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The Natural Science Collections Alliance is a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit association that serves as an advocate for natural science collections, the institutions that preserve them, and the research and education that extend from them for the benefit of science, society, and stewardship of the environment. NSC Alliance members are part of an international community of museums, botanical gardens, herbariums, universities, and other institutions that house natural science collections and utilize them in research, exhibitions, academic and informal science education, and outreach activities. Website: [www.NSCAlliance.org](http://www.NSCAlliance.org).

Note: You are receiving a copy of this electronic report as part of your membership in the NSC Alliance. Contact the Alliance office with any email address or member representative name changes send an email to [spotter@aibs.org](mailto:spotter@aibs.org).