

## **NSC Alliance Washington Report, Volume 5, Issue 6, June 18, 2014**

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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. With proper attribution to NSC Alliance, all material from these reports may be reproduced or forwarded. We encourage you to share this report with colleagues at your institution.

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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### **Action Alert: Senate Considers Spending Package for Science Agencies**

The Senate has begun debating a spending package that would increase funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF), Department of Agriculture (USDA) research programs, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

If enacted, the package would provide an additional \$83 million for NSF and \$105 million for NOAA. USDA intramural and extramural research would increase respectively by \$17 million and \$8.5 million.

It is possible that some amendments could be introduced during debate that could target funding for specific programs. For instance, during House debate of the bill to fund NSF, several amendments were offered to strip funding from social science research at NSF. Historically, Congress and the Administration have allowed NSF to allocate funding among the various research directorates so as to maximize the benefits derived from research. This model has worked well.

If you support increased funding for these agencies or have concerns about potential amendments, please take a few minutes to share your opinion with your Senators. Take action at <http://policy.aibs.org/aibs/app/write-a-letter?1&engagementId=52762>.

## **Registration Open for Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits**

The NSC Alliance is pleased to announce that it is joining with the American Institute of Biological Sciences to sponsor the *6<sup>th</sup> Annual Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits* event.

This national initiative is an opportunity for biologists across the country to meet with their federal or state elected officials to showcase the people, facilities, and equipment that are required to support and conduct scientific research.

The *6<sup>th</sup> Annual Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits* event enables scientists, graduate students, representatives of research facilities, and people affiliated with scientific collections to meet with their elected officials without traveling to Washington, DC. Participants may either invite an elected official to visit their research facility or can meet at the policymaker's local office.

Participants will be prepared for their meeting with a lawmaker through an interactive training webinar. Individuals participating in this event will receive training on how to improve their communication skills and tips for conducting a successful meeting with an elected official. Information will also be presented about federal funding for biological research.

Participation is free for NSC Alliance members, but registration will close on 13 July 2014. For more information and to register, visit [http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressional\\_district\\_visits.html](http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressional_district_visits.html).

## **Science Committee Approves NSF Reauthorization Despite Opposition from Scientists**

The House Science, Space, and Technology Committee has approved a bill that many in the scientific community have expressed deep concerns about. The "Frontiers in Research, Science, and Technology (FIRST) Act of 2014" was approved by the panel on 28 May 2014.

If enacted into law, the legislation would reauthorize programs at the National Science Foundation (NSF), as well as implement new policies. Some of these new policy provisions are worrisome to scientific societies and to universities, including:

- The overall authorization for NSF of \$7.3 billion in fiscal year 2015. This is roughly \$120 million less than the funding level recently passed by the House of Representatives.
- The specification of funding levels for each research directorate at NSF. Congress has not traditionally specified this amount of detail in past authorization bills or in annual appropriation bills.
- Cuts the funding authorization for the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences directorate to \$150 million, which about 40 percent less than the 2014 enacted level.
- Makes it more difficult for scientists who have received more than five years of NSF support to receive new grants.

- New requirement for researchers funded by NSF to not falsify or fabricate data or plagiarize others' work. (The concern here is that the provision signals a fundamental mistrust of scientists and that the requirement is duplicative of existing federal authority.)

Democrats on the committee offered numerous amendments to remove or modify the most controversial provisions of H.R. 4186, but these amendments were defeated.

### **New Science Advocacy Toolkit Available**

The American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) has launched a new website to help researchers participate in the development of the nation's science policy. This free online resource is available at [policy.aibs.org](http://policy.aibs.org).

The Legislative Action Center is a one-stop shop for learning about and influencing science policy. Through the website, users can contact elected officials and sign-up to interact with lawmakers.

The website offers tools and resources to inform researchers about recent policy developments. The site also announces opportunities to serve on federal advisory boards and to comment on federal regulations.

The Legislative Action Center is supported by AIBS, the Society for the Study of Evolution, the Botanical Society of American, and the Association for the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography.

Access the site at <http://policy.aibs.org>.

### **Funding Available for NAGPRA Repatriation**

Grants for repatriation of Native American human remains are available from the Department of the Interior. Recently a report was posted to the National Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act website (<http://www.nps.gov/nagpra/INDEX.HTM>) indicating Native American human remains listed on culturally affiliated inventories and not in notices. Those individuals are immediately available to be in notices. Also, there are published notices of individuals who have not been requested. The tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations listed in a notice are eligible to request repatriation. The costs of transfer can be funded by a NAGPRA grant. If interested please contact: [NAGPRA\\_grants@nps.gov](mailto:NAGPRA_grants@nps.gov).

### **South Carolina Designates State Fossil After Legislative Controversy**

The Columbian mammoth is now the official state fossil of South Carolina. A bill to designate the state fossil had a turbulent path to enactment after it became embroiled in a legislative controversy about the creation of living organisms.

HB 4482 was amended by state Senator Kevin Bryant (R-District 3), who sought to add "as created on the Sixth Day with the other beasts of the field" after each instance of "mammoth." Another amendment established a moratorium on new state symbols and emblems. The amended bill passed the South Carolina Senate on 2 April 2014 in a 35-0 vote.

A conference committee reached an agreement to drop the creationist language. Surprisingly, four of the six legislators on the committee who had previously supported the Senate amendment that inserted the religious reference into the bill supported the modified bill.

The amended version of HB 4482 was passed unanimously in the House and with the support of all but three Senators.

### **Workshop on Digitizing Across Multiple Domains**

A workshop will be held 6-9 October 2014 in Santa Barbara, California on "Leveraging Digitization Practices Across Multiple Domains." The event is organized by iDigBio and the Cheadle Center for Biodiversity and Ecological Restoration at the University of California, Santa Barbara. The workshop is open to curators, collections managers, directors, and other collections professional in public, non-federal natural history collections in the U.S. iDigBio has funds to reimburse up to 40 participants for travel, lodging, and food. There is no registration fee. For more information, visit <https://www.idigbio.org/content/workshop-opportunity-leveraging-digitization-practices-across-multiple-domains>.

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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).

The NSC Alliance Washington Report is a publication of the NSC Alliance. For information about membership in the NSC Alliance, please contact [spotter@aibs.org](mailto:spotter@aibs.org).