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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. Anyone interested in receiving copies of the NSC Alliance Washington Report may subscribe at [www.NSCAlliance.org](http://www.NSCAlliance.org) -- it's free!

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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### **Congress Nears Funding Deadline**

Only two weeks remain before fiscal year 2016 commences. The federal government faces a potential shutdown unless Congress passes a stopgap funding mechanism, known as a Continuing Resolution, by October 1<sup>st</sup>.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) has stated that there will not be a government shutdown this year, but some conservatives in the House seem willing to risk one over a fight about funding for Planned Parenthood.

Other policy debates may influence the duration of a Continuing Resolution, including the possibility of a new budget deal that would partially undo sequestration. McConnell told reporters that it is likely that spending caps would be raised as a result of budget negotiations. Democratic lawmakers have been pushing for an increase for both non-defense and defense programs. Funding for non-defense programs was cut by \$41 billion between 2010 and 2014. After adjusting for inflation, this is a 15 percent reduction.

### **BCoN Workshop Considers Opportunities for Improved Collections Communication**

Thirty scientists, communication and outreach experts, and natural science collection administrators from across the country gathered in Chicago earlier this month for a two-day

meeting to explore how the biodiversity collections community can better collaborate to share biodiversity information with the public and key decision-makers. The Biodiversity Collections Network organized and sponsored the meeting. NSC Alliance, along with the American Institute of Biological Sciences and the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections are founding members of BCoN, which is supported by a National Science Foundation Research Coordination Network grant.

The working group included individuals from institutions across the nation, including representatives of NSC Alliance member organizations.

A summary of the workshop is being prepared and will be shared with NSC Alliance members.

### **Illinois State Museum to Close**

A partisan fight over the Illinois state budget will result in the closure of the Illinois State Museum on September 30, 2015. Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner (R) and the state legislature have been feuding over how to address a multi-billion dollar budget shortfall. The state has been operating without an adopted budget since July 1.

A legislative panel ruled last month in favor of keeping the museum open, but the decision is non-binding. NSC Alliance provided testimony urging the state to keep the museum open.

“I certainly would prefer not to have to close the museum, but we’ve got to manage within our means,” Governor Rauner said after the decision was announced. “Right now we don’t have a budget. We’re running short of resources. We’ve got to take management actions to get through the process as best we can.”

The state estimates that the closure of the museum will save \$4.8 million annually. All but three of the museum system’s 68 employees will be let go.

Representative Raymond Poe (R-Springfield) expressed concerns about the loss of museum talent. “If those people go to another state or another museum, they’re not going to come back,” Poe said. “I don’t know how you replace that.”

The state Senate has approved a bill that would prevent the governor from closing the museum. The measure is being considered in the House.

### **Biodiversity Collections Network Invites Your Participation**

The Biodiversity Collections Network invites all natural history collections and related research centers to participate in community-building initiatives that strengthen the biodiversity collections community and contribute to the national goal of digitizing the specimens and associated data held in U.S. collections. One easy way to show your institution’s support for these efforts is to become a [Supporting Organization](#). There is no cost to show your support, all

you need to do is share our goals. Additional opportunities to participate in Biodiversity Collections Network meetings and programs will be announced on the initiative's website <http://bcon.aibs.org>.

### **More Biological Collections to be Digitized with NSF Support**

In August, the National Science Foundation (NSF) made seven new awards in the Advancing Digitization of Biodiversity Collections program.

Two new Thematic Collection Networks (TCN) will address “grand challenges” in the areas of microfungi and marine invertebrates fossils. Both projects will bring together institutions across the country to digitize their biological specimens. The Microfungi Collections Consortium will digitize more than 1.2 million North American microfungi specimens. The project is led by Andrew Miller of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The other TCN will document the fossil marine invertebrate communities of the Eastern Pacific over the last 66 million years. The principle investigator for that award is Charles Marshall of the University of California, Berkeley.

Five smaller awards were made for Partners to Existing Networks, which will participate in existing TCNs. Those grants will digitize additional specimens of macrofungi, fossils of insects, beetle specimens, and vascular plants from New England.

Learn more at [http://www.nsf.gov/news/news\\_summ.jsp?cntn\\_id=136007](http://www.nsf.gov/news/news_summ.jsp?cntn_id=136007).

### **IMLS Accepting Nominations for National Medal for Museum and Library Service**

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is accepting nominations for the National Medal for Museum and Library Service. The award recognizes museums and libraries that have made extraordinary contributions to their communities. All types of nonprofit libraries and museums are eligible to receive the award. Anyone is free to make nominations, and self-nominations are accepted. Nomination forms are due by October 1, 2015.

Approximately 30 finalists will be selected and featured by IMLS as part of a social media and press campaign leading up to the announcement of the winner. Winners will be honored at a ceremony in Washington, DC, and will be given the opportunity to host a two-day visit from StoryCorps to record community member stories. Winning the medal can also elevate an institutions profile and impact fundraising, programming, and outreach activity. The nomination form and instructions can be found here: <http://www.ims.gov/grants/available/national-medal-museum-and-library-service>.

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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).