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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 -- 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.

Trump Presidency Could be a Significant Change for Science

President-elect Donald J. Trump is a bit of an enigma on science, in part because the campaign was short on policy discussions. The only information about his views on research was provided in response to twenty questions posed by Science Debate, which the Natural Science Collections Alliance helped to prepare.

Trump's responses were peppered with positive statements, such as "scientific advances do require long term investment," and "Though there are increasing demands to curtail spending and to balance the federal budget, we must make the commitment to invest in science, engineering, healthcare and other areas that will make the lives of Americans better, safer and more prosperous."

But these sentiments were seemingly contrasted by other responses. "In a time of limited resources, one must ensure that the nation is getting the greatest bang for the buck," Trump wrote. "We cannot simply throw money at these [research] institutions and assume that the nation will be well served. What we ought to focus on is assessing where we need to be as a nation and then applying resources to those areas where we need the most work. Our efforts to support research and public health initiatives will have to be balanced with other demands for scarce resources."

Of note for the scientific community, however, was a reinvigorated skepticism of climate science: “There is still much that needs to be investigated in the field of ‘climate change.’” When asked about the rapid loss of biodiversity, Trump responded about overreach of unelected officials writing regulations. His response on maintaining American leadership in innovation focused on the role of businesses and ignored the fact that the federal government is the largest provider of funding for basic research.

Trump has previously called for taxes to be lowered and for non-defense spending to be cut. The nonpartisan Center on Budget and Policy Priorities calculates that by the tenth year of Trump’s plan, non-defense spending would be 29 percent lower than current levels, after accounting for inflation.

Some experts, however, urge caution in reading too much into Trump’s prior statements.

“As someone who spent 15 months researching Trump’s past statements, if anyone says they know what a President Trump will do they’re lying,” tweeted CNN reporter Andrew Kaczynski.

As President, Trump could look to increase spending on infrastructure and the military, and building a wall along the Mexican border. Congress, however, may be a roadblock to significant new spending.

According to Representative Dave Brat (R-VA), a member of the conservative House Freedom Caucus: “Yes, there is an inevitable clash on fiscal issues because of the leadership we’ve had over the past 20 years who have led us into \$19 trillion in debt. Right now, there are no easy answers. And I will continue to push everyone to define pay-fors [spending offsets] on everything moving forward.”

One possible source of savings is a hiring freeze in the federal government. President-elect Trump wants to reduce the size of the federal workforce through attrition. “This is a road that many prior presidents have been down, without success,” said Max Stier, president of the Partnership for Public Service. The federal workforce is currently about the same size it was during the early 1960’s at 2.1 million civilian employees.

115th Congress Will Have Many Familiar Faces

In spite of fundamental political change coming to the White House, Congress will largely be unchanged for the next two years. Last week’s election resulted in very few congressional seats changing parties. The Democrats picked up two seats in the Senate (New Hampshire and Illinois) and at least six seats in the House of Representatives. Republicans retain majorities in both chambers, although with smaller margins.

Seven new members will join the Senate. Six have already won their races. The results of the Louisiana race will be determined in a runoff election in December, but neither candidate is an incumbent. More than 50 new members will join the House.

The freshman class of the 115th Congress adds some diversity to the body. Among the freshmen members is the first Hispanic woman elected to the Senate, Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV). Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE) will be the first woman and the first African-American to represent Delaware in Congress; only two other states have never elected a woman to Congress. The number of female Senators will reach a record high of 21. A record of 48 African-Americans and 39 Hispanics will serve in the 115th Congress.

Committee leadership will largely remain the same, especially for many of the committees with jurisdiction over science. The leadership of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees; the House Natural Resources Committee; the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee; and the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee will likely not change.

Representative Lamar Smith (R-TX) and Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX) will stay on as leaders of the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee. Long-time committee member Randy Neugebauer (R-TX) is retiring. Two Democrats on the panel lost primary races for Senate seats and will be leaving Congress. There may be other turnover in committee membership, as the panel is one that most lawmakers are eager to leave in pursuit of more powerful committees.

Ranking Member Johnson pontificated that Chairman Smith may change gears during Trump's presidency. "He's primarily been focused on investigating the Obama Administration over the past couple of years, using his expanded subpoena and deposition powers. I would imagine that there will be much less interest on his part in carrying out a similar investigative agenda against a Trump Administration. I thus am hopeful that the Chairman will return the Committee to a constructive legislative agenda that advances our nation's research, development and innovation enterprise."

The House Appropriations Committee will have new leadership. Current chairman Hal Rogers (R-KY) is facing a term limit of six years per Republican caucus rules. Representative Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ)—the current chair of the Defense Subcommittee—is likely to be promoted to full committee chair. This could cause a ripple of changes in the leadership of other subcommittees. It is speculated that John Culberson (R-TX) will remain at his current post leading the Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Subcommittee. The ranking member of that panel, Mike Honda (D-CA) lost his race for reelection and a new Democratic leader will need to be selected.

In the Senate, Thad Cochran (R-MS) is likely to stay on as chair of the Appropriations Committee. Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) will likely succeed the retiring Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) as Ranking Member. Mikulski also served as ranking member of the subcommittee with jurisdiction over science. Senator Diane Feinstein (D-CA) is rumored to be interested in the position. One committee member, Mark Kirk (R-IL), lost his reelection.

Senator John Barrasso (R-WY) will likely be the new chair of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. The current chair, Jim Inhofe (R-OK), is term-limited. The ranking member slot is also open due to the retirement of Barbara Boxer (D-CA).

NSC Alliance Supports IMLS Reauthorization Bill

The Natural Science Collections Alliance signed a letter in support of S. 3391, “The Museum and Library Services Act of 2016.” The thank you letter was sent to the bill’s sponsor, Senator Jack Reed (D-RI), and primary cosponsors, Senators Susan Collins (R-ME), Thad Cochran (R-MS), and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY).

The legislation would reauthorize funding levels for IMLS for six years. IMLS is the primary federal agency that supports museum education programs, collections curation, and professional development. The bill would also bolster the agency’s research and data collection, maintain an emphasis on state and regional collaboration, expand interagency partnerships, and highlight the importance of access to high-quality museum services for every American.

The America Alliance of Museums organized the letter, which was signed by 22 national organizations and 40 state and regional organizations.

Read the letter at <http://nscalliance.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/imls-reauth-thank-you-102016.pdf>.

NSC Alliance Members Meet with Federal, State Lawmakers

Science took center stage in recent interactions between researchers and policymakers. Across the nation, dozens of researchers and educators met with their lawmakers as part of the Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event, an initiative organized by the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) and sponsored by the Natural Science Collections Alliance.

This nationwide event facilitates meetings between scientists and their elected officials in their local area rather than in Washington, DC or a state capital, and allows lawmakers to learn first-hand about the science and research facilities in their district.

Scientists participating in the event discussed the importance of life sciences research with the individuals responsible for casting the votes that shape the nation’s science policy. Participants ranged from graduate students to senior researchers.

“The Natural History Museum of Utah hosted Congressman Chris Stewart’s District Director and other members of his Utah staff in August. This was a wonderful opportunity to get to know the Congressman’s great staff, to spend time together in the Museum’s collections areas, as well as in the exhibits and other public areas of the Museum—and to talk about how to connect with the Congressman and his staff in the future,” said Ann Hanniball, Associate Director for Community Relations at the Natural History Museum of Utah, which is a member of the Natural Science Collections Alliance, Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections, and AIBS.

Congressman Beto O'Rourke visited the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) Biodiversity Collections and posted on Facebook: "Impressed by UTEP's Biodiversity Collections. These repositories of natural history show the unique and special treasures of El Paso and Castner Range. Over the next few days I'll be posting highlights from these collections so you can share with your friends the special and historical significance of El Paso and Castner Range."

Representative Tom Cole and his staff visited the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History. The University of New Mexico Museum of Southwestern Biology hosted U.S. Senator Tom Udall's staff. Several other NSC Alliance member organizations participated.

The 8th annual Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits were made possible by AIBS, with support from event sponsors Botanical Society of America, Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology, Natural Science Collections Alliance, Organization of Biological Field Stations, Paleontological Society, Society for Freshwater Science, and Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections.

Participants in the event were prepared for their meetings during an interactive training webinar. The program provided information about how best to communicate science to non-technical audiences and tips for conducting a successful meeting with an elected official.

More information about the Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event is available at www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressional_district_visits.html. Resources are also available for scientists who are interested in meeting with policymakers at www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressional_district_visits_resources.html.

Science Communications Workshop, Training Program to Help Collections Community Communicate about Science

NSC Alliance members have the opportunity to participate in a new communications training program for scientists.

Last fall, the Biodiversity Collections Network (BCoN) – a collaborative project initiated by the American Institute of Biological Sciences, NSC Alliance, and the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections – hosted a workshop to explore how the biodiversity collections community can more effectively communicate with decision-makers. Among the issues identified by workshop participants is the need for collections affiliated scientists to become more skilled at communicating with non-technical audiences.

The American Institute of Biological Sciences is responding to this recommendation by offering a [Communications Boot Camp for Scientists](#). This intensive, two-day professional development program is ideal for graduate students, early career professionals, senior researchers, curators, collection managers, as well as organizational leaders and individuals who wish to become leaders.

The Communications Boot Camp will prepare participants to:

- Translate scientific findings for non-technical audiences
- Tell a resonant story that informs decision-makers
- Prepare for and participate in a news interview, including broadcast interviews
- Prepare for and engage in a meeting with a decision-maker
- Protect your scientific reputation
- Identify and define the audience you need to reach
- Understand what policymakers want and need to know from a scientist
- Understand what reporters are looking for in an interview
- Understand how the nation's science policy is developed and implemented

Because of NSC Alliance's strategic partnership with the American Institute of Biological Sciences, individuals nominated to participate by an NSC Alliance member institution are able to register at the reduced AIBS member rate.

Detailed information about this great new program is available at https://www.aibs.org/public-policy/communications_boot_camp.html.

Graduate Student Opportunity: 2017 Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award

Graduate students looking to make a difference in science policy and research funding are encouraged to apply for the 2017 AIBS Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award. This award recognizes graduate students in the biological sciences who have demonstrated initiative and leadership in science policy. Recipients receive first-hand experience at the interface of science and public policy.

Winners receive:

- A trip to Washington, DC, to participate in the Biological and Ecological Sciences Coalition Congressional Visits Day, an annual event that brings scientists to the nation's capital to advocate for federal investment in the biological sciences, with a primary focus on the National Science Foundation. The event will be held in spring 2017. Domestic travel and hotel expenses will be paid for the winners.
- Policy and communications training, including information on the legislative process and trends in federal science funding.
- Meetings with congressional policymakers to discuss the importance of federal investments in the biological sciences.
- A one-year AIBS membership, including a subscription to the journal *BioScience* and a copy of "Communicating Science: A Primer for Working with the Media."

The 2017 award is open to U.S. citizens and U.S. permanent residents enrolled in a graduate degree program in the biological sciences, science education, or a closely allied field. Applicants should have a demonstrated interest in and commitment to science policy and/or science education policy. Prior EPPLA winners, honorable mentions, and AIBS science policy interns/fellows are not eligible.

Applications are due by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on January 9, 2017. The application can be downloaded at <http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/eppla.html>.

Video on Digitization

A new video from iDigBio highlights the need to and benefits of digitizing natural history collections. The short video includes interviews with researchers and students who work with biological specimens. Dr. Larry Page, former president of NSC Alliance and director of iDigBio, said, “There is more information about biodiversity...in natural history collections than in all other sources of information combined.”

Watch the video at <https://vimeo.com/184552432>.

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.

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.