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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.

Congress Finally Wraps Up 2017 Spending Bills

More than seven months after the start of the fiscal year, Congress has finally completed its work on 2017 appropriations. The House of Representatives passed the spending bill with the bipartisan support of 309 Representatives; most of the 118 Representatives who opposed the legislation were Republicans. The Senate passed the bill in a vote of 79 to 18.

Notably, the funding agreement does not include most of President Trump's recent budget requests. There is no funding for a border wall nor substantial increases in defense spending, or deep cuts to domestic programs. The Defense Department will receive a \$15 billion increase.

Science programs were largely spared from the sharp cuts the Trump Administration had sought. A summary of science spending included in the current package:

- Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy: +5 percent
- Agriculture and Food Research Initiative: +7 percent
- Agricultural Research Service: -6 percent
- Department of Energy Office of Science, Biological and Environmental Research: +0.5 percent
- Environmental Protection Agency, Science and Technology: -4 percent
- Forest Service, Forest and Rangeland Research: -1 percent

- Institute of Museum and Library Services: +0.4 percent
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Science: +3 percent
- National Institutes of Health: +6 percent
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: -2 percent
- National Science Foundation: +0.1 percent
 - Research and Related Activities: flat
 - Education and Human Resources: flat
 - Major Research Equipment and Facilities Construction: +4 percent
- Smithsonian Institution: +3 percent
- U.S. Geological Survey, Ecosystems: -0.3 percent

Some senior lawmakers questioned whether it was worth it to kick the metaphorical can so far into the fiscal year when appropriations bills could have passed months ago with bipartisan support. Lawmakers elected to wait until the spring to finish 11 of the 12 appropriations bills so that the new president could provide input.

“I don’t think much has been achieved by this other than we’re racing around here at the last minute when we shouldn’t have been,” said Representative Tom Cole (R-OK), who chairs the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi said that more than 160 “poison pill riders” were removed from the spending package. Environmental issues, women’s health, and immigration were among the contentious issues negotiated.

Federal Hiring Freeze Lifted, But Agencies Directed to Downsize Workforce

The White House has lifted a temporary prohibition on the hiring of new federal employees that was imposed by President Trump a few days after his inauguration. It has been replaced with a directive to agencies to hire in keeping with the president’s 2018 spending plan, which targets massive cuts to science and environmental programs.

Agencies are also directed to submit plans for reorganization and reform to the White House Office of Management and Budget by September 2017. Such plans should outline long-term workforce reductions and factor in if a program is duplicative or non-essential, if the role is better left to states or private entities, and the costs and benefits of the program.

“Consideration should be given to activities that are no longer necessary in today’s society, or where there is another entity that may more appropriately fulfill part or all of the role, such as the private sector, another Federal program, or another level of government,” according to a memo by the budget office.

The Office of Management and Budget has also created a website to solicit ideas from the public about how to reorganize the federal government, including which agencies to eliminate.

Ultimately, Congress holds the authority to make many of these decisions about reorganization or elimination of federal agencies.

Action Alert: Speak Up for Museum Funding

Call your Senators and ask them to sign the dear colleague letter in support of funding for the Office of Museum Services within the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The letter is being circulated by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY).

The deadline for Senators to sign the letter is 17 May.

Find your Senators' contact information at <https://www.senate.gov/senators/contact/>.

A record number of Representatives signed the House dear colleague letter. 166 Representatives supported the request for "robust funding" for IMLS Office of Museum Services in fiscal year 2018.

President Trump proposed the elimination of IMLS in his 2018 skinny budget request to Congress.

164 Representatives Speak Up for Science

Members of the House of Representatives, 164 of them to be more precise, recently sent a letter to members of the House Committee on Appropriations requesting that they provide the National Science Foundation with \$8 billion in fiscal year 2018. The request was led by Representatives G.K. Butterfield (D-NC) and David McKinley (R-WV) and supported by NSC Alliance and about 50 other scientific organizations.

Twenty-one more members signed the letter this year than in 2016.

"From curing diseases and addressing threats to national security, to supporting the development of new businesses and creating jobs, the National Science Foundation enables our workforce to compete globally and helps our nation find solutions for its biggest challenges," said Representative Butterfield.

"The National Science Foundation (NSF) is one of our most important tools for advancing medical cures, keeping our country safe, and fostering economic prosperity," said Representative McKinley. "The United States faces many challenges at home and abroad. Our request will provide the NSF with the resources it needs to meet those challenges and keep America competitive in the global economy and as the world's leader in cutting edge technology."

Enter the 2017 Faces of Biology Photo Contest

Enter the Faces of Biology Photo Contest for your chance to win \$250 and to have your photo appear on the cover of the journal *BioScience*.

The competition, sponsored by the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS), recognizes scientists who use imagery to communicate aspects of biological research to the public and policymakers.

The theme of the contest is “Faces of Biology.” Photographs entered into the competition must depict a person, such as a scientist, technician, or student, engaging in biological research. The research may occur outside, in a lab, at a natural history collection, at a field station, on a computer, in a classroom, or anywhere else research is done.

The First Place Winner will have his/her winning photo featured on the cover of *BioScience*, and will receive \$250 and a one year membership in AIBS, including a subscription to *BioScience*. The Second and Third Place Winners will have his/her winning photo printed inside the journal, and will receive a one year membership in AIBS, including a subscription to *BioScience*.

The winning photo from the 2016 contest is featured on the cover of the April 2017 issue of *BioScience*.

Submissions must be received by 11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time on 1 October 2017.

For more information or to enter the contest, visit <http://www.aibs.org/public-programs/photocontest.html>.

Survey on NEON Bioarchive

The National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON) is seeking input regarding plans for its bioarchive of natural history collections. The bioarchive will include specimens, tissues, and soil and water samples.

The overarching goal of the NEON Bioarchive is to make reference materials and replicate samples available to the science and education communities for future research and retrospective studies.

To inform the design and operation of the bioarchive, a survey has been created. Please provide input by 9 May 2017. The survey is online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/N8DN7RJ>. Questions can be sent to Dave Tazik at dtazik@battelleecology.org.

NSC Alliance Board of Directors to Meet in Denver, Prior to Director’s Summit

The NSC Alliance Board of Directors will meet on 18 June 2017 in Denver, Colorado. The board meeting precedes a one-day Director’s Summit meeting co-organized by NSC Alliance.

More information about the Summit meeting is available [here](#). The Summit meeting also precedes the annual meeting of the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections.

NSC Alliance members interested in learning more about the NSC Alliance board meeting should contact NSC Alliance president Dr. Joseph Cook.

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.