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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 <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.

Senate Approves Funding Boosts for Science

On October 31, 2019, the U.S. Senate voted 84-9 to pass a four-bill spending package that includes fiscal year (FY) 2020 appropriations for Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies; Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies; Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies; and Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies.

The spending measure provides funding increases for most science and environmental agencies and programs relative to FY 2019 enacted levels, including a 3 percent increase for the National Science Foundation, a 4 percent increase for the U.S. Geological Survey, 4 percent increase to the National Parks Service, a 4 percent increase to the Bureau of Land Management, a 5 percent increase for the National Institute of Standards and Technology, a 2 percent increase for the Environmental Protection Agency, and a 3 percent increase for the Agricultural Research Service at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The Smithsonian Institution would receive \$1.05 billion under the Senate bill, \$4.6 million above FY 2019.

Although, the Senate and House have passed some appropriations bills, negotiations between the two chambers on spending numbers will not begin until an agreement is reached on the topline allocations for each of the 12 appropriations bills. A second spending package containing the FY 2020 Defense and Labor-Health and Human Services-Education spending bills failed to get enough votes to advance in the Senate, as a result of disagreements over funding allocations for the U.S.-Mexico border wall.

The government is currently funded by a continuing resolution (CR) that is set to expire on November 21, 2019. This stopgap spending measure was passed last September to avert a government shutdown when the new fiscal year began on October 1. With the budget impasse and the impeachment inquiry underway, it is unlikely that FY 2020 appropriations will be completed before the November deadline. Lawmakers are considering passing another stopgap measure which might fund the government through the end of the year or possibly even well into 2020.

Report Tackles Political Interference in Government Science

The National Task Force on Rule of Law and Democracy (Task Force), a nonpartisan group of former public servants and policy experts at the Brennan Center, recently released a report outlining ways to restrict political interference in government science and fix the process for appointing senior government officials.

According to the [report](#), “In recent years, the norms and expectations that once ensured that our government was guided primarily by the public interest rather than by individual or partisan interest have significantly weakened. There are now far fewer constraints to deter abuse by executive branch actors.”

The report points to instances of “violations of previously respected safeguards” under President Trump, such as when the acting White House Chief of Staff reportedly [ordered](#) the Commerce Department to have the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) issue a statement in support of President Trump’s false claim that Hurricane Dorian would impact Alabama and contradicting forecasters at the Birmingham office of the National Weather Service. Other examples highlighted in the report, include the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s decision to [relocate](#) its research agencies outside of Washington, DC, and the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) [directive](#) to exclude agency-funded scientists from service on its advisory panels.

The Task Force also warns of the breakdown of the process for appointing key government officials, with recent Administrations nominating unqualified candidates or those with conflicts of interest and lawmakers deciding to approve them or ignore them based on partisan interests. Under the current Administration, “less than half the senior roles at the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security are filled; at least a dozen agencies — including two cabinet departments — are run by non-Senate-confirmed acting officials two years into this administration.”

The report warns about the potential damage from these trends and offers proposals to remedy them. “Government research that is guided by politics, not the facts, can lead to ineffective and costly policy, among other harms, and a dysfunctional appointments process risks stymieing vital government functions.” Recommendations offered by the Task Force include, creating scientific integrity standards and protocols for agencies to follow; barring politically motivated manipulation or suppression of research; ensuring the proper functioning of scientific advisory panels; and increasing public access to government research. To address the broken nominations process, the report offers proposals to “encourage the appointment of qualified and ethical people to key government posts, make it harder for presidents to sideline the Senate during the process, streamline the confirmation process for executive branch nominees, and protect national security by fixing the vulnerable White House security clearance process.”

The report highlights some other factors that contribute to government dysfunction, including the “broken campaign finance system, the President’s expansive emergency powers, the weakening of Congress as a check on the Executive, and the politicization of the judiciary,” and stresses the importance of checks and balances in protecting a democracy.

Co-Chairs of the Task Force, Preet Bharara, the former U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York, and Christine Todd Whitman, President of the Whitman Strategy Group, former EPA Administrator, and former Governor of New Jersey, [called](#) on Congress to protect government scientists and their work from political interference in an Op-Ed for the *Washington Post*. “To ensure accountability and deter corruption, Congress should pass legislation that makes it unlawful for government officials to tamper with or censor federally funded scientific research or data for personal, financial, or partisan political gain. Congress should also prohibit officials from disseminating scientific information that they know is false or misleading, and legislators must bar retaliation against government researchers for doing their work.”

Brexit’s Impact on UK Science Funding and Researchers

The United Kingdom’s (UK) share of European Union (EU) research funding has dropped by 28 percent since the Brexit referendum vote was cast in 2015, according to a recent analysis by the Royal Society. There has been a 39 percent reduction in UK applications to Horizon 2020, EU’s flagship research funding program.

The [assessment](#) also found that the number of international scientists coming to the UK through key fellowships has fallen by 179 or 35 percent since the referendum. In the same period, the number of fellowships for scientists relocating to work in Switzerland and Italy increased by 53 each. Ireland, Spain, Belgium, Norway, and Sweden also saw increases.

“We have seen a dramatic drop in the number of leading researchers who want to come to the UK. People do not want to gamble with their careers, when they have no sense of whether the UK will be willing and able to maintain its global scientific leadership,” stated Venki Ramakrishnan, President of the Royal Society. “UK science has also missed out on around €0.5 billion a year because of the uncertainty around Brexit. The potential paralysis of a no-deal

Brexit and the current state of chaos are hurting UK science and that is hurting the national interest,” he added.

In March 2019, UK science minister Chris Skidmore commissioned an external report to get independent advice on how the UK government should strengthen the country’s research enterprise after its departure from the EU. The [report](#), published on November 5, 2019 by Adrian Smith, Director of the Alan Turing Institute in London and Graeme Reid, Chair of Science and Research Policy at University College London, suggests that UK should boost funding for basic research and create a research fellowship program similar to the European Research Council (ERC) if it no longer remains part of Horizon 2020 or its successor, Horizon Europe, after Brexit. Overall, the UK should prioritize raising R&D investments to 2.4 percent of gross domestic product by 2027, a goal that the government committed to in 2017.

The UK government hopes to work out a deal with EU to become an associate member of Horizon Europe, which begins in 2021 and will likely provide close to €100 billion in funding. However, if such a deal is not reached, the report advises the government to replenish the lost EU research funding at its current level of £1.5 billion a year and account for additional transition funding to alleviate any disruptions and provide “short-term stability to protect capabilities” built up previously through EU R&D programs.

The authors’ vision for UK research included other recommendations, such as designing fellowships and postgraduate programs to attract talented researchers from around the world and creating new funding streams to “capture fast-moving and unexpected opportunities,” including emerging international collaborations.

Skidmore has indicated that the UK government will consider the independent report’s recommendations. Researchers, however, remain wary of Brexit’s impact on science funding and research collaborations as uncertainties still remain about the prospects of reaching a withdrawal agreement with the EU. The UK Parliament failed to approve the latest agreement negotiated by Prime Minister Boris Johnson last month and voted to postpone Brexit to January 31, 2020.

NASEM Soliciting Research Applications to Determine Red Wolf Taxonomy

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's (NASEM) Committee on Assistance to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) on Taxonomic Studies of the Red Wolf is calling for research applications to clarify the taxonomic identity of wild canid populations in southwestern Louisiana and other geographic areas where the red wolf (*Canis rufus*) was historically known to inhabit. At the request of USFWS, NASEM convened this expert panel to solicit applications to conduct morphological, genetic, and genomic research on unidentified canids suspected to be red wolves.

Research applications are being accepted through December 3, 2019. USFWS will notify applicants of its decision in January 2020. Queries can be directed to bls@nas.edu. More

information at: <https://nas.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=18fe6f8f25ec0bc7509e65e97&id=e6faed2643&e=a271cda812>

SPNHC and ICOM NATHIST Announce Joint 2020 Meeting

The joint meeting of the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC) and the International Council of Museums Committee for Museums and Collections of Natural History (ICOM NATHIST) will take place from the June 7-13, 2020 in Edinburgh, Scotland, UK. The theme for the meeting is ‘The Role of Natural History Collections in Global Challenges.’

For more information and to register your interest in attending the meeting, go to: <http://www.spnhc-icomnathist2020.com/>

IMLS and ACM to Hold Webinar on Museums for All

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and the Association of Children’s Museums (ACM) are hosting an informational webinar on Museums for All, an initiative dedicated to expanding community access. NSC Alliance members are invited to join the webinar to learn more about how and why more than 450 museums participate in the program.

The webinar will take place on December 11, 2019 at 2:00 PM Eastern time. Information on attending the webinar is available at <https://www.imls.gov/webinars/museums-all-webinar-prospective-participants>.

Call for Community Input: NSF RFI on Data-Focused Cyberinfrastructure

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has issued a Request for Information (RFI) on *Data-Focused Cyberinfrastructure Needed to Support Future Data-Intensive Science and Engineering Research*.

According to the notice, the challenges of growing volumes of scientific data – their availability, transmission, accessibility, management, and utilization – have become urgent and ubiquitous across NSF-supported science, engineering, and education disciplines. NSF is particularly interested in understanding how broader cross-disciplinary and domain-agnostic solutions can be devised and implemented, along with the structural, functional and performance characteristics such cross-disciplinary solutions must possess. To inform the formulation of a strategic NSF response to these imperatives, the RFI asks the research community to update NSF on their data-intensive scientific questions and challenges and associated needs specifically related to data-focused cyberinfrastructure.

AIBS encourages the life sciences community to respond to this request by following the guidelines outlined here: https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf20015

Submissions must be received on or before 5:00 PM Eastern time on December 16, 2019. NSF will share the responses publicly in spring/summer 2020. Questions concerning this RFI should be directed to nsfdatacirfi@nsf.gov.

Two-thirds of North American Bird Species at Risk of Extinction

According to a new report by the Audubon Society, a U.S.-based conservation group, two-thirds of bird species in North America are at risk of extinction due to global temperature rise. The [report](#) concluded that 389 of the 604 types of birds studied, including the wood thrush, the Baltimore oriole, common loon, and mountain bluebird, could vanish as a result of threats to their habitats from rising temperatures, higher seas, heavy rains and urbanization.

Earlier this year, a report by the United Nations Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) [warned](#) that a million species of plants and animals worldwide face extinction within the next few decades as a result of land-use change, climate change, invasive species, and pollution.

National Museum and Library Services Board Meeting Announced

The 40th meeting of the National Museum and Library Services Board will be held on December 5, 2019. The Board advises the Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) on duties, powers, and authority of IMLS relating to museum, library, and information services, as well as coordination of activities for the improvement of these services.

The plenary session of the meeting starting at 9:00 AM Eastern time is open to the public. This will be followed by a closed Executive session. The location for the meeting is 955 L'Enfant Plaza North SW, Suite 4000, Washington, DC 20024. Please contact Katherine Maas at kmaas@imls.gov if you would like to attend the public session of the meeting.

NIH Seeks Input on Proposed Data Management and Sharing Policy

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is seeking public comment on a proposed NIH Policy for Data Management and Sharing and supplemental guidance. According to NIH, the purpose of this draft policy and guidance is “to promote effective and efficient data management and sharing to further NIH's commitment to making the results and accomplishments of the research it funds and conducts available to the public.”

Deadline to submit comments is January 10, 2020. For more information, go to: <https://osp.od.nih.gov/scientific-sharing/nih-data-management-and-sharing-activities-related-to-public-access-and-open-science/>

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.

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