

## **NSC ALLIANCE WASHINGTON REPORT May 3, 2010**

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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. 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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### **NSC Alliance Writes to Chairman Gordon About Collections in COMPETES Act**

On April 28, 2010, the Natural Science Collections Alliance (NSC Alliance) sent a letter to House Science and Technology Committee Chairman Bart Gordon (D-TN) about the preservation and use of science collections. The letter requested that non-federal scientific collections be included along with federal collections in legislation the Committee is developing.

Chairman Gordon is the primary sponsor of HR 5116, legislation that would reauthorize the America COMPETES (Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science) Act. In its current form, HR 5116 would direct the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), in consultation with relevant federal agencies, to develop policies for management and use of federal scientific collections to “improve the quality, organization, access, including online access, and long-term preservation of such collections for the benefit of the scientific enterprise.”

To read the NSC Alliance letter, please visit [http://nscalliance.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/nsca-letter\\_hr5116.pdf](http://nscalliance.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/nsca-letter_hr5116.pdf).

### **House Science Committee Passes COMPETES Act**

The House Science and Technology Committee approved a version of HR 5116 on 28 April 2010, legislation to reauthorize the America COMPETES (Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science) Act. Sponsored by Committee Chairman Bart Gordon (D-TN), HR 5116 is intended to foster innovation, support

scientific research, and improve science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education by boosting federal investments in the National Science Foundation (NSF), National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), and the Department of Energy Office of Science (DoE Science). The bill would increase funding authorizations for these agencies over the next five years, maintaining the doubling path established by the 2007 COMPETES Act. This goal, however, would be reached five years later than the original law intended. Authorized funding levels are specified through fiscal year (FY) 2015, when the NSF could receive, if appropriated, \$10.2 billion.

Within the proposed authorization for NSF, several new programs would be created. At least five percent of the Research and Related Accounts (R&RA) budget would be directed to high-risk, high-reward basic research. Scientists that collaborate on an interdisciplinary research project could receive up to \$5 million in a single grant. NSF could also award cash prizes for innovation to teams that are the first to develop a solution for a pressing problem.

Research infrastructure would benefit under the current version of HR 5116. Although no funding levels are specified, the legislation expresses the sense of Congress that NSF should fund research infrastructure at 24 to 27 percent of the agency's total budget. This funding range is consistent with the recommendations from the National Science Board report, "Science and Engineering Infrastructure for the 21st Century," which highlights the need for investments in instrumentation research, mid-size infrastructure, large facilities, and cyberinfrastructure.

In recent weeks, some NSC Alliance members have requested that the House Science and Technology Committee include a provision in the reauthorization of the COMPETES Act addressing natural science collections. For instance, Arizona State University, American Museum of Natural History, The Field Museum, and the Tulane University Museum of Natural History have asked the Committee to include language that would reflect the policy objectives of the NSC Alliance proposed Presidential Executive Order on Scientific Collections (see <http://nscalliance.org/?p=262>). Although falling short of this request, HR 5116 does include a language that would direct the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) to work with all relevant federal agencies to develop policies on the use, access, and preservation of federal scientific collections. Part of this interagency process would be the establishment of an online clearinghouse for public access to the digitized contents of federal collections.

Several reforms to K-12, undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral education and training programs have also been proposed. NSF would be directed to balance their support for the Graduate Research Fellowship and Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship (IGERT) program. The programs' budgets would be required to increase or decrease at the same rate each year, although the funding levels for the programs would not necessarily be the same. Additionally, two new postdoctoral fellowships would be created - one in STEM education research and the other a more traditional scientific research fellowship. Additionally, institutions of higher education could receive competitive grants to improve undergraduate and graduate education. These funds could be used for the development of interdisciplinary courses, programs, or research opportunities; mentoring programs; programs to improve teaching and mentoring skills of faculty and graduate students; and professional development opportunities for graduate students.

Lastly, HR 5116 would establish an interagency committee to coordinate the policies of federal science agencies related to the dissemination and stewardship of federally funded research, including peer-reviewed publications and digital data. Although the working group would not be required to develop such public access policies, it would be charged with ensuring a uniform set of standards for data and publications when such policies are created. The inclusion of this language may be to ensure adequate stakeholder input in the process commenced by OSTP to create a public access policy.

### **Op-Ed by NSC Alliance President Links Biodiversity, Collections**

In a recent publication on GlobalPost.com, Dr. William Brown calls for the preservation of natural history collections as a way to preserve biodiversity. “Natural history museums and related institutions ... are the keepers of the codes of life. They have the collections and the curators, scientists and educators who understand biodiversity,” wrote Brown, who is President of the NSC Alliance, as well as being the President and CEO of the Woods Hole Research Center in Falmouth, Massachusetts.

The op-ed offers two recommendations that would jointly serve the preservation of biodiversity as well as science collections: preservation of viable tissue and DNA from all known species, and the digitization of all type specimens. These recommendations are drawn from a report authored by the chief executives of eight internationally recognized natural science collections.

To read the op-ed, please visit <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/worldview/100330/DNA-imaging-biodiversity?page=0,0>. The full set of recommendations can be downloaded at <http://nscalliance.org/?p=275>.

### **New Rule Regarding Culturally Unidentifiable Native American Human Remains**

The Department of the Interior has finalized a rule regarding procedures for the disposition of culturally unidentifiable Native American human remains in the possession or control of museums or federal agencies. The rule implements the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

According to the notice published in the Federal Register:

“In brief, this rule pertains to those human remains, in collections, determined by museums and Federal agencies to be Native American, but for whom no relationship of shared group identity can be reasonably traced, historically or prehistorically, between a present day Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization and an identifiable earlier group. These individuals are listed on inventories as culturally unidentifiable Native American human remains. The rule requires consultation on the culturally unidentifiable human remains by the museum or Federal agency with Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations whose tribal lands or aboriginal occupancy areas are in the area where the remains were removed. If cultural affiliation still cannot be determined and repatriation achieved, then the Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization may

request disposition of the remains. The museum or Federal agency would then publish a notice and transfer control to the tribe, without first being required to appear before the Review Committee to seek a recommendation for disposition approval from the Secretary of the Interior. Disposition requests, which do not meet the parameters of the rule, would still require approval from the Secretary, who may request a recommendation from the Review Committee.”

The rule will go into effect on May 14 2010. Until that time, comments being accepted. For more information, please visit <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/2010-5283.htm>.

### **NSF BIO Director Presents 2011 Budget to Scientists**

On April 21, 2010, NSF Acting Assistant Director for Biological Sciences (BIO) Dr. Joann Roskoski spoke to participants of the annual Biological and Ecological Sciences Coalition (BESC) Congressional Visits Day. Her talk included a presentation of FY 2011 BIO priorities, including some initiatives related to natural science collections. A copy of her presentation has been posted to the NSC Alliance website ([http://nscalliance.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/nsfbudget2011\\_roskoskipresentation.pdf](http://nscalliance.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/nsfbudget2011_roskoskipresentation.pdf)).

### **Barcode of Life Project Gets Boost from Canada**

The Canadian government has committed \$35 million in new funding for the International Barcode of Life project over the next five years. Some of the funding will be spent for the construction of a new Centre for Biodiversity Genetics at the University of Guelph, near Toronto, which will be the scientific hub for the project. The Centre will house labs capable of sequencing the DNA of 200,000 specimens each year. The International Barcode of Life aims to analyze the genomes of half a million species by 2015.

### **NSF, NIH Offer New Bridging the Sciences Program**

The National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) are offering two new research grants that aim to support cutting-edge, visionary research at the interface of the life, physical, mathematical, and computational sciences. The [“New Biomedical Frontiers at the Interface of Life and Physical Sciences”](#) grant will support interdisciplinary basic research that may create entirely new areas of biomedical investigation. The [“Transforming Biomedicine at the Interface of Life and Physical Sciences”](#) grant will support interdisciplinary research with clinical or translational implications.

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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)

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