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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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## **2015 NSC Alliance Year in Review**

In 2015, the NSC Alliance engaged in a number of notable activities to raise the profile of natural history collections with policymakers, researchers, and the general public. A few highlights are presented below:

- Successfully re-nominated LindaLee (Cissy) Farm to serve on the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act Review Committee. She previously chaired the committee from 2013-2015. NSC Alliance initially nominated her based on the recommendation of the Bishop Museum.
- Provided testimony to House and Senate Appropriations Committees in support of increased funding for research, curation, and digitization of natural history collections from the National Science Foundation and the Department of the Interior.
- Held a science briefing for policymakers in Washington, DC, in December 2015 on progress toward the goal of digitizing the nation's biodiversity collections. The event also showcased ways to use crowdsourcing and citizen science in natural history collections.
- NSC Alliance identified and nominated members to participate in the Biodiversity Collections Network "Collections Communication Workshop" that was held at The Field Museum in September.
- Provided comments to the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee about what should be included in legislation to reauthorize the National Science Foundation.

Read the full NSCA 2015 summary at [http://nscalliance.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/nsca\\_2015\\_summary.pdf](http://nscalliance.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/nsca_2015_summary.pdf).

## **Science in the State of the Union**

President Obama highlighted the importance of science to the nation in his final State of the Union address on January 12, 2016. One of the four “big questions” the president posed was “how do we make technology work for us, and not against us—especially when it comes to solving urgent challenges like climate change?”

The president announced a new “moonshot” to “cure cancer once and for all.” Vice President Joe Biden will lead the effort. This was one of only a handful of new initiatives publicized in the address, which the White House had promoted as looking beyond the next year and instead addressing “issues that will shape our country for generations to come.” Since the address, the vice president met with cancer researchers to launch the cancer research effort.

Investing in clean energy and combating climate change were also addressed in the speech.

“Sixty years ago, when the Russians beat us into space, we didn’t deny Sputnik was up there. We didn’t argue about the science, or shrink our research and development budget. We built a space program almost overnight. And 12 years later, we were walking on the moon,” said President Obama.

These priorities as expected to be highlighted in the president’s forthcoming budget request for fiscal year 2017. Obama is scheduled to release his spending plan on February 9.

## **Abstracts Sought for Small Collection Symposium**

iDigBio and the Small Collections Network are hosting the Small Collections Symposium at the SPNHC 2016 meeting in Berlin in June 2016. Presentations are invited on current museum-based educational and workforce training initiatives, the development and sharing of novel educational or training modules and resources, the involvement of graduate and undergraduate students and early career professionals in collections digitization initiatives, graduate and undergraduate internships and courses focused on experiential learning in collections management and curation, and future directions for natural history museum workforce development focused on students and early career professionals.

Abstracts are due by March 15, 2016.

Learn more at <http://www.spnhc2016.berlin/page40.html>.

Questions about the Small Collections Symposium can be addressed to Anna Monfils ([monfilak@cmich.edu](mailto:monfilak@cmich.edu)) or Gil Nelson ([gnelson@bio.fsu.edu](mailto:gnelson@bio.fsu.edu)).

## **Host Sites Sought for Synthetic Biology Public Engagement Event**

The Building with Biology Project, funded by the National Science Foundation, is organizing an event this summer to engage the public and scientists in a dialogue about synthetic biology. Two hundred kits are available for free for host sites. The kits include six hands-on activities designed to promote conversations between the public and scientists about the social and ethical considerations of synthetic biology, as well as other resources such as posters. The deadline to apply for a kit is February 1, 2016. Learn more at <http://www.buildingwithbiology.org/get-involved>.

## **Fiscal Year 2016 NAGPRA Grant Applications Now Available**

The National Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act Program is accepting fiscal year 2016 grant applications for repatriation and consultation/documentation projects. The application materials and guidelines are available on Grants.gov. Competitive consultation/documentation applications are due by March 11 by 11:59 p.m. (EST). To apply, visit Grants.gov and search for Funding Opportunity Numbers: P16AS00001 for NAGPRA Repatriation Grants or P16AS00002 for NAGPRA Consultation/ Documentation Grants.

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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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