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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.

Science Agencies Could be Casualty of President Trump's Budget

President Donald J. Trump has proposed a more than 10 percent funding cut for non-defense programs in order to pay for \$54 billion in new military spending. The additional defense spending would be in excess of the spending limits set by the Budget Control Act of 2011, which limits growth in federal spending.

According to the White Office of Management and Budget, no changes will be made to entitlement programs, such as Social Security and Medicare, which represent approximately 60 percent of total federal spending. This mandatory spending has grown over the years and now places significant pressure on other federal programs, known as discretionary spending. Congress appropriates funds annually for these discretionary programs, such as the National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, and other federal agencies and programs.

Some agencies have been targeted for deeper cuts than the 10 percent average for all non-defense programs. The Environmental Protection Agency is rumored to be slated for a 25 percent cut, including the elimination of programs that protect beaches and safeguard homeowners against radon poisoning. Roughly 3,000 staff positions would be eliminated. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration would lose 17 percent of its funding overall, although the proposed cuts to research and satellite data divisions are deeper. The Sea Grant program, which integrates research, education, communication, and extension, would be eliminated.

The president's announcement was met with skepticism by some Republicans in Congress.

Representative Ken Calvert (R-CA), who chairs the House Interior and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee, said "You cannot balance the budget using discretionary funds. I would encourage them to look at all of the accounts."

"Trump is going to need to understand that Republicans here don't want to cut spending that much so he is going to need to do the serious work," said Representative Raul Labrador (R-ID). Although Labrador supports Trump's goal of increased defense spending, he wants to see entitlement spending cuts as well.

Newly confirmed Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke vowed to push back against the 10 percent budget cut that the White House is seeking. "I looked at the budget. I'm not happy. But we're going to fight about it, and I think I'm going to win at the end of the day," said Zinke during his first all-employee address.

President Trump has not yet publicly released his budget plan for fiscal year 2018. The President's budget request is typically released at the beginning of February, although it is not unusual for a new president to release a 'slim budget' until the full budget request is ready later in the spring.

Congress is not required to enact the president's budget request. Lawmakers can create their own spending plan after considering the White House's plan.

NSCA, 2,000 Organizations Urge Congress to Address Sequestration

The Natural Science Collections Alliance was among more than 2,000 organizations that called upon federal lawmakers to provide relief from budget sequestration for non-defense discretionary programs.

Since 2013, sequestration has dramatically cut funding available for federal programs that support research, environmental conservation, education, housing, foreign aid, and other non-defense programs.

Congress has twice acted to lessen the extent of sequestration. The current deal expires this year, which means that fiscal year 2018 will have the full impacts of sequestration.

[Read the letter to Congress.](#)

Dear Colleague Letter from NSF on Programmatic Changes

The National Science Foundation (NSF) recently issued a letter to the scientific community regarding reorganization of the Systematics and Biodiversity Science cluster. The program will now have one core program that will support all research proposals that were formerly submitted

to the Phylogenetic Systematics, Biodiversity: Discovery and Analysis, and Genealogy of Life programs. This change will be effective for preliminary and full proposals submitted to the 2018 deadlines for the Division of Environmental Biology Core Programs solicitation. Learn more at <https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2017/nsf17052/nsf17052.jsp>.

Co-Sponsors Needed for Botanical Sciences Legislation

Legislation has been introduced in the House of Representatives to support the botanical research capacity of the federal government. H.R. 1054, “The Botanical Sciences and Native Plant Materials Research, Restoration and Promotion Act,” is sponsored by Representatives Mike Quigley (D-IL) and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL).

The bill emphasizes the importance of protecting native plants and addresses botanical workforce issues. It would create a new program of botanical science research within the Department of the Interior to help increase federal botanic expertise and would allow Interior to hire additional botanical personnel. The bill would create a student loan repayment program for botanists. It would also create a preference for federal agencies to use locally adapted native plant materials in their land management activities.

The legislation is endorsed by [62 professional organizations](#), including the American Public Gardens Association, Botanical Society of America, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Missouri Botanical Garden, National Tropical Botanical Garden, and the Natural Areas Association.

Individuals interested in helping to advance this legislation can reach out to and encourage their members of Congress to cosponsor HR 1054. Letters can be sent to Representatives via the [AIBS Legislative Action Center](#).

For more information, [read a summary of the bill](#).

Updates on the progress of the bill can be found on the [Plant Conservation Alliance Resources page](#). If you are interested in getting involved more closely in these efforts, please contact info@plantconservationalliance.org.

Legislation Introduced to Protect Scientific Integrity

Bills have been introduced in the House of Representatives and Senate to “protect scientific integrity” at federal agencies. The bills are sponsored by Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL) and Representative Paul Tonko (D-NY). The legislation would require agencies with science programs to adopt and implement scientific integrity policies that include whistleblower protections.

The legislation would create new protections for scientists to communicate freely with Congress and the public. It would also ensure that federal scientists could review press releases and other public materials that are based on their research before the materials are distributed.

Twenty-four federal agencies have already formulated scientific integrity policies under orders from the Obama Administration. Those agencies could use their existing policies to comply with the legislation, if it is enacted.

Botanical Research Fellowships

The Missouri Botanical Garden has announced a call for applications for the 2017 Al Gentry and Shirley Graham Fellowships. The Gentry Fellowship supports Latin American botanists. The Graham Fellowship supports scientists from Latin America, Madagascar, Vietnam, and Tanzania who work in the field of botany/plant sciences. The deadline to apply is July 31, 2017. Learn more at <http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/plant-science/plant-science/resources/opportunities.aspx>.

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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