

Testimony of Howard Silver, Executive Director, Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA), to the House Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee, House Appropriations Committee. Honorable Frank Wolf, Chairman. March 21, 2013.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

My name is Howard Silver and I am the Executive Director of the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA). The Consortium represents 115 professional associations, scientific societies, universities and research institutes concerned with the promotion of and funding for research in the social, behavioral and economic sciences. COSSA functions as a bridge between the research world and the Washington community. A list of COSSA's membership is attached.

COSSA appreciates the opportunity to comment on budgets for the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). Given the sequester, the continuing budget disputes, and the lack of the President's proposed FY 2014 budget, COSSA does not recommend any specific numbers for these agencies' appropriations for FY 2014. COSSA strongly requests that the Committee recommend a generous increase for NSF over its final FY 2013 budget to restore funds lost by the sequester. In particular, we endorse enhanced funding for its Research and Related Activities and Education and Human Resources accounts.

The NIJ and BJS have been underfunded for so long that as two National Academies' reports have noted they also need enhanced resources to fulfill their missions. We strongly appreciate the Subcommittee's support for the set-aside of Office of Justice Programs' funds for these two agencies. All three of these agencies significantly impact federal support that social and behavioral scientists receive to investigate issues important to the nation's future. NSF's Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE) directorate provides 62 percent of federal funding for basic research in these sciences at U.S. colleges and universities. In some disciplines, such as political science, it is close to 95 percent.

COSSA is well aware that each year the Subcommittee confronts difficult choices among competing agencies under its jurisdiction. Especially in this era of budget reductions, we hope that you can provide sufficient funding for these agencies so that we do not curtail this nation's capacity for scientific research, education, and evidence-based policy making. COSSA appreciates your generosity to these agencies in the past and hopes that this can continue.

NSF

It is discouraging that the last time I was here, in 2011, the Administration was proposing a FY 2012 NSF budget of \$7.8 billion. Barring unforeseen developments, the FY 2013 budget will be around \$6.9 billion. COSSA strongly hopes that in considering the FY 2014 budget, the Subcommittee will lead the Congress in restoring the lost funds for NSF, which is still the world's premier basic science agency supporting ALL the sciences.

COSSA regrets the departure of Dr. Suresh as director after his all-too-brief tenure. We applaud the elevation of Dr. Cora Marrett to Acting Director. As someone who has served in that

capacity before as well as Deputy Director and leader of two of NSF's directorates, she is well-qualified and experienced to lead the Foundation. COSSA hopes that the Administration would give her strong consideration for the Director's position.

COSSA was also deeply disappointed by the House's action in 2012 to prohibit funding for NSF's political science program. The Political Science Program supports scientific research that creates knowledge critical for making our own democracy stronger, for understanding the actions of nations around the world, and for achieving efficiencies and fairness in our public policies. Like all scientific endeavors, its researchers follow the scientific method of developing hypotheses, testing them through data collection and analysis, and producing publishable results while archiving the data for replication. Political science does not take sides or make decisions about values. It provides data for understanding political processes and identifies generalizable relationships. This research is used, mostly without acknowledgement, by decision makers in this legislative branch, the executive branch, and in capitals around the world. The research saves lives, analyzes political upheaval, increases competitiveness, and explains democratic governance.

Research in the social, behavioral and economic sciences (SBE) and its directorate at NSF have and will continue to contribute mightily to this nation and the world. At a hearing on Cybersecurity in the House Science, Space, and Technology on February 26, three witnesses, all with experience in the private sector, made clear the importance of research on human behavior to deal with this important national security issue. A former Vice President at McAfee told the panel: [Cybersecurity] is "no longer an engineering discipline. It requires deep involvement from economists, sociologists, anthropologists and other scientists to create holistic research agendas..." In addition, an acknowledged key paper in this area, "Risk in Networked Information Systems," was written by University of Michigan political scientist Robert Axelrod. NSF needs to play a key role in supporting this interdisciplinary research.

NSF and its funders have always fostered the notion of "transformative research." Here are two from the SBE disciplines that have hugely changed our thinking about an important topic. The late Elinor Ostrom of Indiana University and Daniel Kahneman of Princeton University both won the Nobel Prize in economics, even though Ostrom was trained as political scientist and Kahneman as a psychologist. Both made tremendous contributions to the understanding of decision making; one by collectivities and the other by individuals. Ostrom, according to the Nobel Committee, in her analysis of economic governance: "Challenged the conventional wisdom by demonstrating how local property can be successfully managed by local commons without any regulation by central authorities or privatization." Kahneman, again from the Nobel citation: "Integrated economic analysis with fundamental insights from cognitive psychology, in particular regarding behavior under uncertainty, thereby laying the foundation for a new field of research."

NSF has also recognized the importance of research on disasters. Two areas of studies are risk communication and resilience. H. Dan O'Hair, of the University of Kentucky and his team used demographic, socioeconomic, physiological, and psychological data to improve the accuracy and efficacy of advisories and warnings for weather systems leading to improved communication of hurricane information that promotes more effective protective decision-making, thus saving lives and property. They now have an I-CORPS grant to examine the potential of extending the

scientific knowledge gained from the NSF-supported studies to improving private communication platforms. The NSF-supported work of Roxane Cohen Silver of the University of California, Irvine, has contributed to our understanding of how people cope with disasters, from the September 11th tragedy to earthquakes and firestorms. Both O’Hair and Cohen will be participants in an April 25th congressional briefing, co-sponsored by the House R&D Caucus and the Coalition for National Science Funding.

Another area of innovation in the SBE sciences remains the contributions of interdisciplinary research, including geography, responsible for the creation of Geographic Information Systems (GIS). NSF’s support of the National Center for Geographic Information Systems and Analysis in the mid-1980s spearheaded the development of what is now a multi-billion GIS industry. These systems are now applied by states, counties, and localities, supplying the backbone of crime mapping activities that have played such an important role in the crime reduction America has experienced in the past two decades. GIS is also used by the private sector to improve delivery systems and store location planning.

As you know, the SBE directorate has funded significant amounts of research on youth violence that was summarized in a report recently produced for this Subcommittee. We are also grateful that SBE is supporting and enhancing access to the three Gold Standard Surveys – the Panel Study on Income Dynamics, the General Social Survey and the American National Election Studies. Each of these has painted a unique longitudinal portrait of Americans’ economic, social, and political attitudes and behavior, so important for policy making at all levels of government.

COSSA also welcomes the inter-agency neuroscience initiative and thanks the Subcommittee for its support. Under the direction of OSTP’s Philip Rubin, former Director of the SBE’s Division of Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences (BCS), the initiative is moving ahead examining many challenges, including those presented by the proposed Decade of the Brain. The BCS division has strongly supported research in cognitive science and the neuroscience of cognition and behavior, such as language learning and usage, thought, decision making, and social processes. It is now soliciting proposals, especially interdisciplinary ones, to extend the research to include adaptation to changing environments as well as neural mechanisms underlying dynamic decisions and communication.

The Education and Human Resources Directorate has transformed itself with a renewed emphasis on research and evaluation of STEM programs. COSSA strongly supports this and we are delighted that NSF has improved its inclusion of the SBE sciences as part of the “S” in STEM. Not only is it usually SBE scientists who conduct the research and evaluation studies, but it is important that these sciences are seen as an integral part of K-12 education in this country. They have a lot to offer elementary and secondary students.

COSSA applauds NSF’s continued interest in broadening participation of underrepresented groups in the sciences. Working with NSF and NIH, the COSSA-led Collaborative on Enhancing Diversity in the Sciences has held two workshops on the issue. The latest was held in May 2012 and the report will be available shortly. We also thank NSF for providing two speakers for the event, Dr. Marrett, and Kellina Craig-Henderson of the SBE directorate.

Again, we hope the Subcommittee can restore NSF's lost funding during the FY 2014 appropriations process to keep America's scientific prowess in ALL disciplines intact.

NIJ and BJS

The distinguished criminologist, the late James Q. Wilson, who helped disseminate the “broken windows” theory that led many big-city mayors to confront crime and delinquency resulting in significant decreases in criminal activities in the past 15 years, argued that the federal government can be and should be the research and development arm of the criminal justice system supporting research and data collection, analysis, and dissemination. The NIJ and BJS have been the key agencies for this purpose. Their recently departed leaders John Laub and James Lynch brought professionalism and the knowledge gained from their careers as scientists to their positions. We hope similarly qualified people will soon be appointed to replace them. The NIJ has played a key role in designing and testing crime prevention and control strategies by focusing on three major areas – the nature of crime, the causes of crime, and the response to crime. It has funded studies and evaluations that are rigorous, scientifically sound, and valuable to criminal justice practitioners – police, prosecutors, judges, correctional officials, and policymakers.

NIJ has recently emphasized the notion of “Translational Criminology” – the translation of scientific discoveries into policy and practice to help prevent, manage, and control crime. It includes: addressing the gaps between scientific discovery and program delivery; finding evidence that something works and figuring out how to implement the evidence in real world practice settings; and knowing what conditions facilitate or inhibit field use of research evidence.

NIJ has also tried to develop an innovative, integrated, cutting-edge research agenda by bringing together the three seemingly disparate sciences the agency supports — the social, forensic and physical sciences.

Also in the past few years, with constrained resources, NIJ has focused on two very important developments: the significant increases in the rate of incarceration; and the soaring crime rate during the 1980s, which was followed by equally large declines during the 1990s and continuing into the new century. The Institute has co-funded with the MacArthur Foundation the creation of a panel at the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to study the causes of consequences of high rates of incarceration and a series of roundtables to synthesize the research on crime trends.

Other areas of NIJ funding in the past two years include new studies of: California prison realignment; race, crime, and victimization; victim-offender overlap; desistance from crime; police legitimacy; and criminal sanctions. NIJ has continued its work in research programs such as violence against women, teen dating violence, and sexual assault. The goal in all of these efforts is to develop a cumulative body of research knowledge.

NIJ is also deeply committed to funding the most rigorous scientific designs including evaluations using randomized controlled trials (RCT) wherever possible. Right now, NIJ has 17 RCTs in the field. To further strengthen the science, NIJ has initiated Standing Peer Review Panels consistent with practices at other science agencies throughout the federal government. NIJ will also take over Crime Solutions.Gov, a program initiated by former Assistant Attorney General Laurie Robinson when she led the Office of Justice Programs.

One major success story is NIJ's support of the Kennedy School of Government's Executive Session on Policing and Public Safety. Here leading police executives and researchers come together on a regular basis to tackle the major issues facing the field, by focusing on practitioners and finding out the knowledge they need to do their jobs. Currently, there are several papers under production, jointly written by police chiefs and researchers. The sessions also focus attention on how best to "influence the field" through concerted efforts to transform practice and policy. Given the success of this initiative, NIJ will convene a new Harvard Executive Session beginning in 2013 on the future of community corrections policy. The goal is to assemble a panel of expert researchers, practitioners, and others to explore key ideas to help shape the future of policy, practice, and research on issues of offenders supervised in the community.

Data generated by BJS on victims, offenders, law enforcement, prisons and the courts are the basis of many congressional decisions on funding and legislation. We appreciate the Subcommittee's support for the redesign of the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), which has allowed reinstatement of the sample size and interviewer training, and the development of sub-national estimates. It will also allow BJS to fulfill the goal of finding better ways for measuring rape and sexual assault in this self-report survey.

BJS also hopes to embark on NCS-X: The National Crime Statistics Exchange. The first phase of this program is to facilitate the development of a nationally representative sample of U.S. law enforcement agencies that provide detailed information on crime incidents in their communities. It is anticipated that these data will be extracted from local management information systems and assembled at the national level using existing state and national data collection infrastructures.

The agency has also designed and implemented a software system that taps rap sheets housed in state repositories across the nation and yields a searchable database that summarizes the recorded criminal histories of tens of thousands of individuals. The database will support recidivism studies.

Through the modestly-funded State Justice Statistics program, the Statistical Analysis Centers (SACs) conduct research on issues that are essential to both state and federal agencies, such as assessing prescription drug use, human trafficking, and the effects of sex offender policy reform. SACs also have served as the majority of data collection providers for the BJS Arrest-Related Deaths data series. The NRC report urged that BJS expand and strengthen its relationships with the SACs.

Finally, BJS is attempting to upgrade its collection of criminal court processing information to take advantage of the capabilities of modern court management information systems. It has also undertaken efforts to assess the feasibility of building a system of administrative records on white collar crime and an establishment survey of victim services agencies.

These initiatives by NIJ and BJS to help us better understand crime will have difficulty succeeding happen without enhanced resources. We again thank you for the set-aside funds, but more is necessary.

As always, thank you for the opportunity to present our views.