Washington Insider

President Obama Nominates David S. Ferriero To Be Archivist of the U.S.

President Obama announced his intent to nominate David S. Ferriero to the position of archivist of the United States. Ferriero currently serves as the Andrew W. Mellon Director of the New York Public Libraries (NYPL). Ferriero succeeds professor Allen Weinstein, who resigned as archivist last December. The New York Public Libraries is one of the largest public library systems in the United States and one of the largest research-library systems in the world. Ferriero is responsible for collection strategy; conservation; digital experience; reference and research services; and education, programming, and exhibitions. The NYPL has 2,600 full-time employees and a budget of $273 million. Prior to taking the director position in June 2007, Ferriero served as the Chief Executive of NYPL's Research Libraries for three years. Ferriero was formerly the Rita DiGiallonardo Holloway University Librarian and vice provost for library affairs at Duke University. Ferriero joined the staff of Duke University in 1996. He began his career as a junior library assistant at the the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Libraries, where he spent 31 years, leaving in 1996 as the acting co-director of the MIT libraries.

Obama Administration To Release White House Visitor Records

On September 3, the Obama administration and Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW) settled four ongoing cases regarding public access to White House visitor records. As a result, for the first time in history records of White House visitors will be released. Aside from a small group of appointments that cannot be disclosed because of national security imperatives or their necessarily confidential nature (such as a visit by a possible Supreme Court nominee), the record of every visitor who comes to the White House for an appointment, a tour, or to conduct business will be released. Each month, records of visitors from the previous 90–120 days will be made available online. The agreement stems from lawsuits CREW filed after the Bush and later the Obama administration refused to provide White House visitor records in response to CREW's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. Visitor records are created by the Secret Service as part of its statutory responsibility to protect the president, vice president, their residences, and the White House generally.

APSA Joins Appeal to End Ideological Exclusion in U.S. Visa Policy

APSA has joined with other scholarly societies and higher education groups to ask the Obama administration not to employ a practice of denying visas on the basis of political views and associations and to review a number of recent cases to determine if political views were the determining factors in the denial of visas. This action was based on recommendation from the APSA Committee on Professional Ethics, Rights, and Freedoms upon hearing of the case of Adam Habib, a South African political scientist denied a visa to attend the American Sociological Association (ASA) Annual Meeting. ASA has filed a lawsuit in federal courts over this issue and dozens of the nation's leading academic, free speech, and civil rights organizations have sent a letter to Attorney General Holder, Secretary of State Clinton, and Secretary of Homeland Security Napolitano urging them end the refusal of visas based on ideology. The letter is available online at www.aclu.org/safefree/general/39050leg20090318.html.

CNSTAT Panel Recommends Changes in SIPP

The U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) began in 1983 and in 2013 will introduce a major redesigned and reengineered version. SIPP was originally developed to "fill gaps in the available information on the short-term dynamics of income, household composition, employment, and eligibility for and participation in government assistance programs experienced by families in America." In 2006, the bureau decided to reengineer SIPP to reduce its costs and improve data quality and timeliness. At the time, the bureau asked Congress to discontinue the original survey. Congress rejected that request and has continued to restore its funding and sample size. The Census Bureau proposed to make greater use of administrative records, move to annual interviews, use event history calendars, and modernize its collection and processing systems. It asked the Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT) of the National Academies to address specific aspects of the reengineering design. The panel criticized the survey for falling short of its original promise with regard to timeliness, usability, and maintenance of data quality. Therefore, the panel recommended that any redesigned SIPP should have as its primary goal "to provide data for policy analysis and research on the short-run (intrayear) dynamics of economic well-being for families and households, including employment, earnings, other income, and program eligibility and participation." To accomplish this, the report argues that the "Census Bureau must continue to use survey interviews as the primary data collection vehicle." It rejects replacing the survey with administrative records from federal and state agencies, "primarily because they do not provide information on people who are eligible for—but do not participate in—government assistance programs and, more generally, because they do not provide all of the detail that is needed for SIPP to serve its primary goal." Furthermore, the committee indicates that many records are also difficult to acquire and use because of legal restrictions on data sharing, and some of the information they contain may be erroneous. For a copy of the new report go to http://www.nap.edu/catalog/12715.html.

Sources were the Consortium of Social Science Associations's Washington Update, the National Humanities Alliance's NHA-Announce, and APSA.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S104909650999045X Published online by Cambridge University Press