Washington Insider

2010 Census Advisory Committee Holds Last Meeting

With the decennial Census results becoming part of the 2011 reapportionment, redistricting, and population diversity discussions, the 2010 Census Advisory Committee, on which COSSA served for the past six years, held its last meeting on February 1.

Census Bureau Director Robert Groves once again led the panel through the successes of 2010: great mail-back response rate; returning $1.9 billion to the Treasury; the best census enumerator workforce ever; over 250,000 partners; a paid media campaign that worked; continuous updating of the address list; bilingual questionnaires in high Hispanic population areas; and follow-up questionnaires in high non-mailback areas. Groves mentioned that he would feel the Census was a complete success when people stopped asking about the handheld computers that were supposed to help in the non-response follow-up, but during testing were found faulty. He also noted that the Census found strong evidence of the mortgage crisis. There were 14.3 million vacant housing units in 2010, compared to 9.9 million in 2000.

There is still a lot to do, Groves noted. Data releases will continue. Right now, the Bureau is fulfilling the requirement that each state gets its numbers by April 1, so that they can begin the process of redistricting their state legislatures, as well as learn the demographic changes that have taken place during the past ten years. The Bureau will also conduct its post-enumeration survey to further determine the quality of the 2010 count

NSB Seeks Feedback on NSF's Merit Review Criteria

National Science Board (NSB) Chairman Ray Bowen has issued a "Dear Colleague" letter to the scientific community to provide feedback on the National Science Foundation's (NSF) two merit review criteria (Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts).

The NSB has appointed a Task Force on Merit Review that has been charged to consider all options when developing their final recommendations, from keeping the criteria just as they are to completely rewriting them, or anything in between. The Task Force is now gathering input from a wide variety of stakeholder groups and will develop its report and recommendations during 2011.

According to Bowen, "the merit review process is at the heart of NSF's mission," and the merit review criteria form the critical base for that process. NSF evaluates all submitted proposals using the Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts review criteria. The application of these criteria in the proposal review process has a critical role in shaping NSF's increasingly complex and interdisciplinary award portfolio. The current review criteria have now been in effect for over a decade, and thus, it is timely to evaluate the utility of the current criteria in enabling NSF to accomplish its mission. In addition, the recently enacted America COMPETES Reauthorization Act specifically mentioned the Broader Impacts Review Criterion.

Bowen urges scientists to take the opportunity to provide comments and suggestions for improvements as the Task Force undertakes its review. NSF has established a website to submit thoughts and ideas on several issues of interest to the Task Force (http://www.nsf.gov/funding/meritreviewform.cfm).

National Humanities Alliance Held Annual Meeting and Humanities Advocacy Day March 7–8

The National Humanities Alliance's 2011 Annual Meeting and Humanities Advocacy Day took place March 7 and 8 in Washington, DC. Pre-meeting events, including an NEH grants workshop and advocate training, took place on Sunday, March 6. Highlights of the Monday meeting included an opening keynote address by David Skorton, President of Cornell University, and a luncheon program announcing the launch of the American Academy of Arts and Science's Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences. Morning and afternoon panel topics included "Exemplifying the Humanities" and "Value Propositions for the Humanities." Jim Leach, chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and Rachel Goslins, executive director of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, spoke at Monday evening's Capitol Hill reception to celebrate the humanities. On Tuesday, March 8, advocates participated in Humanities Advocacy Day by visiting congressional offices to talk about the value of the humanities.

AERA Briefing Explores Payoffs of Long-Term Investment in Education Research

On February 14, the American Educational Research Association (AERA) joined the Education Deans Alliance and the National Academy of Education in co-sponsoring a Capitol Hill Briefing on the "Payoffs of Long-Term Investment in Education Research."

The session stemmed from the premise that education research based on long-term funding has led to important payoffs for education policy and practice in such areas as resource allocation, school and classroom organization, and the education and evaluation of teachers.

Susan Fuhrman, president of Teachers College, Columbia University, founding director and chair of the Management Committee of the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE), and president of the National Academy of Education, introduced and moderated the session.

John Fantuzzo, professor of human relations in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania, spoke about children who are "left behind" because of public health or family risk situations. Bridget Terry Long, professor of education and economics at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, described an experiment to simplify the college-aid application process by providing on-site assistance at H&R Block Tax Centers.

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Robert H. Meyer, research professor and director of the Value-Added Research Center at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, discussed the contributions of his center, which focuses on the development, implementation, and use of statistical methods to measure the value-added contributions of schools and teachers to student achievement. Brian Rowan, professor in the School of Education and research professor at the Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, explained his 13-year study of comprehensive school reform programs by examining the effectiveness of three large programs, the Accelerated Schools Project, America's Choice, and Success for All.

Michael S. McPherson, president of the Spencer Foundation, and Ruby Takanishi, president of the Foundation for Child Development, provided the private foundation perspective. McPherson called for larger studies that will provide "decisive answers to well-defined questions."

For more information, see http://www.aera.net/Default.aspx?id=11330. ■

From the National Coalition for History's Washington Update (http://historycoalition.org/archives/), the COSSA Washington Update (http://www.cossa.org/communication/update.shtml), and the National Humanities Alliance's News (http://www.nhalliance.org/news/index.shtml).

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