**NEWS SUMMARY**

On Tuesday evening, Congressional leadership reached an agreement on the $1.1 trillion FY15 appropriations bill – known as the Cromnibus. This bill would fund every agency in the federal government, except the Department of Homeland Security (which is funded under a three-month Continuing Resolution in response to President Obama’s recent executive order on immigration), until September 30, 2015. Details of the bill are provided below.

Last night, the House of Representatives voted 219 to 206 to pass the FY15 Cromnibus bill. The Cromnibus now moves to the Senate which is expected to vote on it in the next two days.

This week’s Congressional hearings included:
- **December 9** Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism hearing entitled "Campus Sexual Assault: the Roles and Responsibilities of Law Enforcement.";
- **December 10** House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee hearing on unmanned aircraft systems;

Congressman-elect Mike Bishop (R-Lansing) has been named to the House Education & Workforce Committee (joining Rep. Walberg (R-Jackson)) and to the House Judiciary Committee.

Congressman-elect John Moolenaar (R-Midland) has been named to the House Agriculture Committee.

Congressman-elect Dave Trott (R-western Wayne and western Oakland counties) has been named to the House Judiciary Committee.

The Senate confirmed Ellen Williams on Monday to be the Director of the Department of Energy's Advanced Research Projects Agency – Energy.

**SUMMARY OF THE FY15 CROMNIBUS**
TOTAL: $1.1 trillion

Link to the Legislation (Senate amendment to H.R. 83) and Accompanying Report: [http://rules.house.gov/bill/113/hr-83](http://rules.house.gov/bill/113/hr-83)

**AGRICULTURE**

* Hatch-Act (Ag Experiment Stations): level funded $243.7 million.

* Smith-Lever 3(b)-(c) (Extension): level funded $300 million.

* Agriculture and Food Research Initiative: $325 million, an increase of $8.6 million (+2.7%).

* Food Safety Outreach Program: $2.5 million for this new program. To prepare the next generation of farmers, the program would provide food safety training and technical assistance, education, and extension to owners and operators of small farms, small food processors, and small fruit and vegetable vendors affected by the Food Safety Modernization Act of 2011.

* Note: A break out of funding for the National institute of Food and Agriculture can be found on Page 7 of the Cromnibus’ bill.

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DoD) RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT (R&D)**

* Note: Information about funding for DoD can be found in Division C of the bill/report.

Provides an overall increase of $257 million over the President’s FY15 Budget Request (+5%) for non-medical basic research.

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>President’s FY15 Budget Request</th>
<th>Cromnibus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Army 6.1:</strong></td>
<td>$424,176</td>
<td>$460,526</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Army 6.2:</strong></td>
<td>$862,611</td>
<td>$981,661</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Army 6.3:</strong></td>
<td>$917,791</td>
<td>$1,113,541</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Navy 6.1:</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>$1,081,133</td>
<td>$1,101,133</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Air Force 6.3:</strong></td>
<td>$593,817</td>
<td>$630,317</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Defense-wide 6.1: $562,497
Defense-wide 6.2: $1,692,415
Defense-wide 6.3: $2,933,402

Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA): $2.91 billion (+$136.1 million over FY14). According to the bill’s report, “within that request, a larger increase of $175,986,000 is included specifically for Advanced Technology Development projects, which develop subsystems and components and integrate them into system prototypes for field experiments or tests in a simulated environment.”

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

* Note: Information about funding for the Department of Education can be found in Division G.

Student Aid
- **Pell Grants**: $22.475 billion. This maintains the discretionary portion of the maximum Pell grant award level at $4,860 for the 2015-2016 school year. After addition of the mandatory supplement, the maximum award is projected to increase by $100 to $5,830.
  - The bill takes $303 million out of the Pell Grant surplus to help fund the collection of federal loans by non-profit loan servicers whose mandatory funding was eliminated last year.
- **Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants**: $733 million, level with FY14.
- **Federal Work Study**: $989.7 million, an increase of $15 million.
- **TRIO Programs**: $840 million, up $1.5 million.
- The bill includes language directing the Department to modify the Free Application for Federal Student Aid to include a question on whether the applicant is a foster child. It also brings back the Ability-to-Benefit option for federal student aid, which will allow students who have yet to have received a high school diploma/GED to be eligible for aid in adult or post-secondary career pathway programs.

Institute of Education Sciences: $574 million essentially level with FY14.


Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE)
- **First in the World**: $60 million, a $15 million cut from FY14. Of the $60 million, $16 million would be for minority serving institutions.
- **FIPSE Simon Study Abroad** program: not funded.

New National Center For Students With Disabilities: $2 million for the creation of a program that would help disabled students transition between high school and college, and train faculty and
staff on how best to serve and accommodate students with disabilities on their campuses.

*Services For Student Veterans On College Campuses: $5 million. This grant program has not been funded since 2010.*

There is no funding for the Administration's proposed college rating system.

*Graduate Students*

- **Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN):** $29.3 million, level with FY14.
  
  - **Report language on GAANN:** “The agreement recognizes the important role the Jacob K. Javits Fellowship has played in encouraging scholarship in the social sciences and humanities. As the Secretary consults with appropriate agencies and organizations to designate the fields that are considered “areas of national need,” the Secretary is strongly encouraged to consider the humanities and social sciences as eligible fields and take into account the extent to which these areas fulfill a compelling national interest during the fiscal year 2015 Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need grant competition.”

*Effective Teaching and Learning Programs:* the cromnibus does not fund these replacements for the Mathematics and Science Partnerships program.

**DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (DOE)**

*Note:* Information about funding for the DOE can be found in Division D.

*Office of Science:* $5.071 billion, the same as the FY14 enacted level.

- FRIB funded at $90 million.

*Advanced Research Projects Agency – Energy:* $280 million, the same as the FY14 enacted level.

The bill supports $25 million for the fourth year of funding for the Critical Materials Energy Innovation Hub and $56 million for four Clean Energy Manufacturing Institutes.

**EBOLA SUPPLEMENTAL EMERGENCY FUNDING**

*Note:* These funds are in addition to NIH, Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and DoD regular appropriations.

*CDC:* $1.77 billion for a domestic and international response. This includes $155 million for public health emergency preparedness and $255 million for state and local activities.
**Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority:** $157 million.

**NIH:** $238 million (equal with the President’s budget request) to help with clinical trials to evaluate investigational vaccines and therapies.

**State Department:**
- $1.4 billion for international disaster assistance;
- $312 million for global health programs; and
- $711 million for an economic support fund.

**DoD:**
- *Chemical and Biological Defense Program:* $50 million for continued work and vaccines and therapies.
- *DARPA:* $33 million to help conduct Phase 1 clinical trials of experimental vaccines, and $12 million for diagnostic efforts.

**MANUFACTURING**

* Note: the legislative language for the “Revitalize American Manufacturing and Innovation Act” can be found on pages 226-251 of the bill.

Establishes a Network for Manufacturing Innovation and authorizes it through 2019 the Economic Development Administration’s Regional Innovation Program. This program supports the development of regional innovation strategies and allows for competitive grants for activities relating to the development of regional innovation clusters.

No funds are appropriated to implement these new programs.

**NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION (NASA)**

* Note: Information about funding for NASA can be found in Division B.

**TOTAL:** $18 billion, an increase of $364 million.

**NASA Science:** $5.2 billion (an increase of $93 million).

**Aeronautics:** $651 million (an increase of $85 million).

**Space Technology:** $596 million (an increase of $10 million).

**Education:** $119 million.
Space Grant: $40 million.

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS (NEA) & NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES (NEH)

* Note: Information about funding for the NEA and NEH can be found in Division F.

Both the NEA and the NEH are flat funded at $146 million.

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH (NIH)

* Note: Information about funding for NIH can be found in Division G.

TOTAL: $30.1 billion, a $150 million increase.

Ebola: $238 million in additional new money for NIH. It would go to research and clinical trials related to Ebola (see Ebola Supplemental Emergency funding above).

Alzheimer’s Disease: a $25 million increase for the National Institute on Aging, with the expectation that a significant portion be devoted to Alzheimer’s disease.

Commitment to New and Early Stage Investigators: the bill directs the NIH to develop a new approach with actionable steps to reduce the average age at which an investigator first obtains ROI funding.

Extramural and Intramural Research: the bill requests an update in the FY16 budget request on what processes NIH has in place to ensure consistency between the application of scientific policies to both extramural and intramural researchers.

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**Summaries of News Articles of Interest**
*(Please click on the Title to link to the entire article.)*

**AGRICULTURE & VETERINARY MEDICINE**

CONAWAY NAMES [HOUSE AGRICULTURE] COMMITTEE LEADERS
By Ellyn Ferguson, CQ.com, December 11, 2014

K. Michael Conaway, the incoming chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, named fellow Texan Randy Neugebauer as his vice chairman for the 114th Congress. Conaway and Neugebauer served as farm bill negotiators and have worked on other issues. Conaway also reshuffled the jurisdictions of subcommittees and announced the chairmen. Freshman David Rouzer of North Carolina claims the top spot on the Livestock and Foreign Agriculture subcommittee and second-term Rep. Jackie Walorski of Indiana takes the gavel of the Nutrition subcommittee. Rick Crawford of Arkansas takes over the panel Conaway led, General Farm Commodities and Risk Management. Glenn Thompson of Pennsylvania, currently chairman of the Conservation, Energy and Forestry panel, will become chairman of the Conservation and Forestry subcommittee. Austin Scott of Georgia will lead the Commodity Exchanges, Energy and Credit subcommittee while Rodney Davis of Illinois will be chairman of the Biotechnology, Horticulture and Research panel.

* This is the complete news article.

EPA TO REVIEW STATE POLLINATOR PROTECTION PLANS
By Chase Purdy, Politico’s Morning Agriculture, December 9, 2014

State officials are working with the [Environmental Protection Agency] EPA to draft guidance on the development of plans to protect bee populations. As part of an ongoing effort to stem the decline of bees, EPA is looking to encourage states to develop pollinator protection plans and set up its own approval process for the documents, according to discussions by the EPA's State FIFRA Research and Evaluation Group at a meeting held Monday, in Arlington, Va. EPA’s guidance will recommend that pollinator protection plans allow for regular updates, facilitate communication between beekeepers and applicators, include best management practices and allow for public participation and outreach, said Jim Gray, chairman of the group. "The goal of the guidance is really to identify what we think are critical elements of state-managed, EPA-approved pollinator protection plans," Gray said.

* This is the complete news article.

EPA LOOKS TO ADD AG ADVISERS
By Jenny Hopkinson, Politico’s Morning Agriculture, December 11, 2014

The EPA is seeking nominations for an Agriculture Science Committee to provide advice to its Science Advisory Board on EPA matters that have a "significant direct impact" on farming. In a Federal Register notice set for publication today, the agency says the committee, which was called for in the 2014 farm bill, along with the USDA will provide input on EPA science when called upon. Nominees should have expertise in "agricultural economics, including valuation of ecosystem goods and services; agricultural chemistry; agricultural engineering; agronomy, including soil science; aquaculture science; biofuels engineering; biotechnology; crop and animal science; environmental chemistry; forestry; and hydrology," and be submitted to the
agency by Jan. 30, 2015, according to the notice.

* This is the complete news article.

**VEXING ISSUES FOR VETS**  
**By Elizabeth Redden, Inside Higher Ed, December 11, 2014**

As the accrediting agency for U.S. veterinary schools prepares to face its government oversight committee today, it’s fighting off hundreds of comments from veterinarians critical of its standards and policies, including its approval of veterinary schools that lack traditional teaching hospitals or are located overseas. U.S. Department of Education staff are recommending that the American Veterinary Medical Association’s Council on Education be granted just six months to a year to come into compliance with various federal standards for the recognition of accreditors.

**FEDERAL APPROVAL OF VET SCHOOL ACCREDITOR RECOMMENDED**  
*Inside Higher Ed, December 12, 2014*

A federal advisory committee on Thursday recommended that the U.S. Department of Education extend for only six months its recognition of the accreditor for veterinary schools and require the agency to prove that it is following federal standards.

**BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES**

**BREAKING: NIH TO END CONTROVERSIAL CHILDREN’S STUDY**  
**By Science News Staff, Science Insider, December 12, 2014**

The NIH is cancelling the National Children’s Study, a controversial and long-delayed plan to follow the health of 100,000 U.S. children from birth to age 21, NIH director Francis Collins announced this morning.

**EBOLA DRIVES INTEREST IN MORE BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH**  
**By Emily Ethridge, CQ.com, December 5, 2014**

Lawmakers are using the Ebola outbreak to call for a broader investment in biomedical research and public health funding to avoid scrambling to respond to a specific disease. Top appropriators from both parties say they are committed to investing in biomedical research, particularly the NIH. But the parties have not agreed on how to boost that funding, and lawmakers also have criticized some of the government’s public health preparations. Rosa DeLauro, the top Democrat on the Appropriations subcommittee funding the Department of Health and Human Services, has introduced a bill (HR 5797) that would provide $5 billion for the
Public Health Emergency Fund. The fund is meant to hold resources that the HHS secretary can distribute when a public health emergency is declared, but it has been funded only twice since its establishment in 1983, according to DeLauro’s office. “The Public Health Emergency Fund has been largely ignored, and that needs to end,” DeLauro said in a statement. “Not using every resource available to deal with issues like H1N1, Ebola, or Enterovirus D68 is an abdication of our responsibilities.” In the Senate, Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., and Tom Coburn, R-Okl., called for hearings into whether HHS’s Project Bioshield is failing to properly identify and respond to threats. The program is aimed at speeding the development, acquisition, and availability of medical countermeasures for a variety of threats. McCaskill said the project has been too focused on anthrax, and not prepared enough for influenza and other infectious diseases. In addition, lawmakers have questioned why more hospitals were not better prepared to handle Ebola patients, noting that some hospitals criticized the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for not providing better protocols. “One of the things that Ebola has shown us very clearly is Mother Nature always has the upper hand,” and HHS will need to build up the country’s capacity for training, equipment, and high-containment facilities, said Nicole Lurie, HHS assistant secretary for preparedness and response.

* This is the complete news article.

**OMNIBUS EXPECTED TO INCLUDE FUNDING TO FIGHT EBOLA**

By Emily Ethridge, *CQ.com*, December 5, 2014

Appropriators are expected to include significant extra funding in an omnibus spending package to help agencies continue responding to the Ebola outbreak, but the final number will be less than President Barack Obama requested. The president renewed his call for the emergency funding with a visit last week to the NIH, following positive news about an Ebola vaccine candidate. Last month, Obama requested nearly $6.2 billion in emergency funding for the Ebola response, including $420 million to support advanced clinical trials, manufacturing, and review and regulation of potential vaccines and treatments. House and Senate appropriators said they expected the fiscal 2015 spending package, which they plan to be unveil this week, to include less money for Ebola than the president requested — but they did not say how much less. Jack Kingston, chairman of the House Appropriations subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, said, “$6.1 billion is a lot of money, particularly since the agencies that it goes to often have efficiency problems. We’re really going over that with a fine-toothed comb.” The Georgia Republican said he expected a big part of the cut would come from a requested contingency fund, which would give $751 million to HHS and $792 million to the State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development. The administration said the fund would help provide flexibility in responding to the evolving situation, and could support expanded monitoring or enhanced global health security efforts. If a vaccine is found to be safe and effective, the contingency fund also could support a limited vaccination campaign for health care workers treating Ebola patients. Iowa Democratic Sen. Tom Harkin, chairman of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee that oversees HHS, also said he expected the Ebola request to be cut, but did not know by how much. Because the extra funding would go to many different departments and agencies — HHS, USAID, State and Defense — any agreement on a final level will need the support of multiple lawmakers. If leaders cannot come to an agreement on a
spending plan, or if their package does not win support from the White House and a sufficient swath of lawmakers, they will have to resort to a backup plan of a government-wide short-term continuing resolution. Such a bill could include an “anomaly” that would provide some additional funding for the Ebola response, but it would likely be significantly less than the request. Speaking at the NIH, Obama called on Congress to provide the emergency funding before adjourning for the holidays, and said he has been encouraged by bipartisan support for the plan in visits with lawmakers. He also asked Congress to maintain ongoing investments in biomedical research. “No potential Ebola vaccine has ever made it this far, so this is exciting news. But it’s also a reminder of the importance of government-funded research and our need to keep investing in basic research,” he said to applause at the NIH. Currently, there are no therapies or vaccines certified as safe and effective for treating or preventing Ebola. Last week, the NIH announced successful results from a phase one clinical trial for one of the five Ebola vaccine candidates that HHS is supporting, known as cAd3. Results from phase one clinical trials for another vaccine candidate are expected sometime this month, and the other three candidates are still a few months away from phase one trials, according to the White House. Obama warned that more money will be needed to continue the progress. “We cannot beat Ebola without more funding. If we want other countries to keep stepping up, we will have to continue to lead the way,” he said. The NIH is continuing its accelerated plans for wider testing of the cAd3 vaccine candidate, according to Anthony Fauci, director of the NIH’s National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. But despite multiple agencies’ fast-tracking, it could easily be several months before a vaccine candidate is ready for distribution. Trials of some of the vaccine candidates are happening in other countries, and the NIH, Department of Defense and the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority are supporting production of tens of thousands of doses of vaccines for planned trials, the administration says. The NIH and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are discussing with West African governments about planning large phase two and phase three clinical trials to test vaccine candidates in communities there. “These trials are anticipated to begin in the near future,” the White House said in a fact sheet. Targeted Funding: Given the results and planned next steps, “there’s something to be said for funding that targets this Ebola vaccine,” said Ellie Dehoney, vice president of policy and advocacy at Research!America. She noted that convincing people in at-risk nations to participate in the trials could be challenging, and that the cost of doing such testing in the real world can be dramatically higher than in laboratory settings. The president’s emergency funding request includes $238 million for the NIH to support advanced clinical trials evaluating the safety and efficacy of investigational vaccines and therapies, and $157 million for BARDA to manufacture those products for use in clinical trials. In addition, the FDA would receive $25 million to help develop, review, and regulate Ebola vaccines and treatments. Dehoney says that even a one-time funding boost could help researchers who are working on developing Ebola treatments and vaccines. But she warned that lawmakers also need to focus on “reinvigorating” the NIH so it can be able to respond to all kinds of diseases and public health threats. Disruptions in research funding come at the cost of lives and time, she said. Several Democratic lawmakers have also used the Ebola crisis to push for increasing overall funding for the NIH.

* This is the complete news article.
WITHIN NIH'S FLAT 2015 BUDGET, A FEW FAVORITES
By Jocelyn Kaiser, ScienceInsider, December 10, 2014

Although the massive 2015 spending agreement reached by Congress last night gives the NIH a flat budget, it contains modest increases for a few programs within the agency. The $150 million increase, a mere 0.5% boost over the $29.9 billion it received last year, still leaves NIH below its budget level in 2012 before sequestration took a 5% bite, note biomedical research advocates. It falls short of the $606 million increase that a Senate spending subcommittee had approved and is less than the White House's request of $211 million.

FOLLOWING UP ON THE BIOSKETCH IMPLEMENTATION
By Sally Rockey, Rock Talk, December 9, 2014

We certainly heard a lot of input on the blog on the issue of the new biosketch. I really appreciate the dialog. Even when the input is critical it is so important to hear what you think.

PCORI AND NIH PARTNER ON REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS TO STUDY HOW TO IMPROVE BLOOD PRESSURE CONTROL IN HIGH-RISK INDIVIDUALS
Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) Press Releases, December 9, 2014

The NIH, as part of a research partnership with the PCORI, issued a Request for Applications to study how to improve blood pressure control among populations at highest risk for suffering hypertension-related strokes, heart attacks, and other cardiovascular events. PCORI has committed up to $25 million to fund up to two patient-centered trials through the Hypertension Disparities Reduction Program Partnership with NIH's National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute and National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke.

NIH TO HOST AMGEN SCHOLARS
Association of American Medical Colleges Ad Hoc Group Weekly Round Up, December 5, 2014

NIH will for the first time participate as a host institution for the 2015 Amgen Scholars Program, a summer education enrichment program for science-minded undergrads interested in pursuing research or science careers. Students accepted into the program will spend the summer working at the NIH campus in Bethesda, Md., where they will be matched with research mentors in the NIH Intramural Research Program. In addition to a science and research focus, students will participate in leadership development programming. Find more information at: https://www.training.nih.gov/amgenscholars

* This is the complete news article.
**PCORI BOARD APPROVES PROVIDING UP TO $50 MILLION FOR CER ON HEPATITIS C**

PCORI Press Release, December 9, 2014

The PCORI Board of Governors today approved the development of a PCORI Funding Announcement (PFA) providing up to $50 million for up to four comparative clinical effectiveness research studies on the best ways to diagnose and treat hepatitis C virus infection. The Board also approved the issuance of two PFAs totaling up to $150.7 million to support the second phase of development of PCORnet, PCORI’s initiative to improve the efficiency of health research nationwide by harnessing the power of data from electronic health records and other sources.

**STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON DRUG ABUSE, NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH**

NIH Request for Information, December 10, 2014

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) is revitalizing its Strategic Plan (refer to http://www.drugabuse.gov/about-nida/2010-strategic-plan) to provide a framework for the research it will support over the next five years. The purpose of this Request for Information (RFI) is to seek broad public input on the research priorities to be included in the plan. NIDA staff and leadership will review and consider all comments as the Institute renews its Strategic Plan.

**NOTICE OF INTENT TO PUBLISH A FUNDING OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT FOR BRAIN: RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES USING INVASIVE NEURAL RECORDING AND STIMULATING TECHNOLOGIES IN THE HUMAN BRAIN**

NIH Notice, December 8, 2014

The NIH BRAIN initiative (Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies) intends to promote a new initiative by publishing a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) to solicit applications for research on Research Opportunities Using Invasive Neural Recording and Stimulating Technologies in the Human Brain...The FOA is expected to be published in January 2015 with an expected application due date in Spring 2015.

**NOTICE OF INTENT TO PUBLISH A FUNDING OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT FOR THE BRAIN INITIATIVE: NEW CONCEPTS AND EARLY-STAGE RESEARCH FOR LARGE-SCALE RECORDING AND MODULATION IN THE NERVOUS SYSTEM**

NIH Notice, December 12, 2014

The NIH BRAIN initiative intends to promote a new initiative by publishing a FOA to solicit applications for research on New Concepts and Early-Stage Research for Large-Scale Recording and Modulation in the Nervous System...The FOA is expected to be published in Winter of 2015 with an expected application due date in Spring 2015.
SAMPLES FOR COMPREHENSIVE STUDIES OF GENOME SEQUENCE VARIATION UNDERLYING COMMON DISEASE
NIH Request for Information, December 10, 2014

The National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI) intends to publish a Request for Applications soliciting Centers for Common Disease Genomics, whose purpose will be to undertake large, comprehensive genome sequencing studies to identify and characterize variants underlying a range of common, complex human diseases. The general goals of the planned program follow from discussions at an NHGRI Workshop on the Future of Genome Sequencing (http://www.genome.gov/27559219), and a Concept for an initiative has been approved by the National Advisory Council for Human Genome Research (see http://www.genome.gov/27558796). Briefly, the approved Concept envisions an effort that will pursue multiple common disease projects that cover a range of different presumed genomic architectures and study designs, and that will be as comprehensive as possible with respect to study power, ability to analyze both coding and noncoding regions, and other factors.

SMITHSONIAN JUMPS INTO BIODIVERSITY GENOMICS WITH NEW INSTITUTE
By Elizabeth Pennisi, ScienceInsider, December 12, 2014

On the heels of two vast analyses of the genomes of both birds and insects, the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., has announced that it will launch a virtual biodiversity genomics institute to accelerate efforts to capture and catalog all the DNA from Earth’s flora and fauna.

FEDERAL BUDGET PROCESS

BUDGET DEAL UNVEILED
By Michael Stratford, Inside Higher Ed, December 10, 2104

Congressional leaders agreed Tuesday on a spending bill that would avoid a government shutdown and provide modest increases to student aid programs and scientific research. The compromise deal, which would fund most of the federal government until next October... allows the maximum Pell Grant award to increase next academic year by $100 to $5,830 because of an automatic mandatory increase in funding. Aside from the Pell Grant program, several other student aid programs would also see slight increases in funding. Funding for scientific research would increase under the deal, but at far lower rates than research advocates had hoped.

A LOOK AT R&D FUNDING IN THE FY 2015 OMNIBUS
By Matt Hourihan, American Association for the Advancement of Science, December 11, 2014

...On the science and technology front, several agencies and programs would see real funding increases above FY 2014 levels. Many of these increases are higher than the rate of inflation.
Other increases, like those for the NIH or the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), are below inflation but above the rest of the discretionary budget. This is an important baseline to keep in mind: discretionary spending is the pool from which most R&D funding is drawn, and is nearly flat in FY 2015. Under these tight constraints, every dollar one program gets is a dollar another program doesn’t.

**FIRST LOOK: NEW U.S. SPENDING DEAL A MIXED BAG FOR SCIENCE**
*By David Malakoff Jeffrey Mervis, ScienceInsider, December 9, 2014*

NASA and the NSF appear to be among the winners—relatively speaking—in a spending deal reached Tuesday night by lawmakers in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, with both agencies receiving modest funding boosts. But research budgets at the NIH and the Department of Energy would remain flat.

**NSF’S 2015 BUDGET: A SMALL INCREASE AND A BIG PAT ON THE BACK**
*By Jeffrey Mervis, ScienceInsider, December 10, 2014*

Funding for the social sciences at National Science Foundation (NSF) is safe for another year, and the agency will be able to participate fully in the Obama administration's [Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies] BRAIN Initiative. But NSF may not have enough money to boost stipends for its prestigious graduate research fellowships, and it will have to pinch pennies in planning a 2017 move to a new building in northern Virginia. NSF fared extremely well compared with most federal agencies, which received flat or reduced funding. It gets an increase of 2.4% increase, to $7.344 billion.

**OMNIBUS OFFERS A GLIMPSE OF BUDGET BATTLES NEXT YEAR**
*By George Cahlink, CQ.com, December 12, 2014*

Congress appears ready to clear a more than 1,600-page bill that would fund most of the government through fiscal 2015. It’s the second year in a row Capitol Hill has used a combination of spending caps and policy riders to forge a cross-party consensus on a broad funding package. The bill suggests lawmakers may have found a way to put back on track the annual appropriations process that's been derailed in recent years by partisan fights that have often left government working under temporary funding plans. But as members of Congress go for a three-peat next year, changes in political dynamics will make it much harder to harness the forces that shaped this year’s accord. *Spending Caps*: No single factor did more to spark this week’s package than the 2013 budget deal between Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., and Rep. Paul D. Ryan, R-Wis., the heads of their respective Budget panels in the 113th Congress. The agreement — setting defense and domestic spending caps — allowed appropriators to avoid a drawn-out fight over allocations for the 12 bills and to focus on writing the legislation. To get spending bills rolling again, the new leaders of the House and Senate Budget Committee in the 114th Congress will need to rekindle the bipartisan tone of Murray and Ryan. But with Republicans controlling both chambers, and holding the budget gavels, the party has no
immediate incentive to adopt a bipartisan budget. They don’t need the Democrats because the White House can’t veto it. The GOP could also write spending bills with its own allocations. The real fight would come as those measures are sent to the president and he vetoes them. In some ways, Ryan and Murray had the easier task because they were from different parties. They are both Capitol Hill veterans with the skills to negotiate a deal and the respect within their caucuses to sell it. And more importantly, neither of their parties had full control of Congress. The new Budget chairmen don’t look likely to seek a budget deal with Democrats. Tom Price, of Georgia, will take the gavel from Ryan. He made his mark as a leading critic of Obamacare and doesn’t seem eager to reach out to the White House. Jeff Sessions of Alabama and Michael B. Enzi of Wyoming are the candidates to take the Senate Budget chairmanship and both have cultivated strong conservative credentials. Without a bipartisan budget, the chance of writing timely spending bills fades, the odds of presidential vetoes increase and the threat of government shutdowns, or at least a series of stopgaps, increases. Policy Riders Are the New Earmarks: Congress has found something to replace, at least in part, the earmarks disavowed several years ago. Earmarks — often derided as pork — long helped make it easier to get members of Congress to agree to spending plans. The elimination of earmarks several years ago coincided with the spending strife that was routine until Ryan and Murray found a way out of it. In their place, the 113th Congress relied on policy riders to bring members along. The 114th Congress will need these policy riders as a lubricant to moving future spending deals. This year’s omnibus is filled with dozens of riders aimed at winning support for the package from both parties. Negotiators were careful to exclude the most onerous proposed riders from the final bill. Instead, the riders often seemed to trade policy and spending goals. For example, Republicans won concessions on environmental policy, but Democrats prevented steep cuts in the EPA. And Democrats won more funding for financial regulatory agencies after allowing GOP riders to ease financial oversight. Incoming Majority Leader Mitch McConnell wants to use the riders to test the White House next year. But Republicans will need to be careful not to let their appetite for riders get carried away and force White House vetoes. Indeed, the policy riders that liberated members to find a solution this year could easily ensnare them next year and turn spending bills into partisan fights over policy. Listen and Ignore: Congressional leaders and appropriators listened to impassioned pleas from liberals and conservatives for shaping the package — and then largely ignored them to strike a deal. Republicans took a moderate course by backing short-term funding for Homeland Security to protest immigration policies, not incorporating the more explicit ban on those policies sought by the right. Democrats were more muted in opposing some GOP riders than liberals would have liked, but in return were able to block deep cuts in domestic spending. A crucial first test for leaders in both parties next year will be their handling of the short-term funding for the Homeland Security Department that runs out at the end of February. Conservatives will press for changes in the White House immigration actions in exchange for new spending for the department. Leaders will be pressed to again find a middle ground that won’t enrage the right. If they can conjure up a bipartisan solution on Homeland Security, it could set the course for more deal making on the fiscal 2016 spending bills. But it’s more likely those efforts will falter, given the depth of the GOP’s anger at President Barack Obama’s immigration moves. That would signal Congress is in for a long slough in passing fresh appropriations bills. Stopgap funding may become the norm.

* This is the complete news article.
ACCREDITATION PANEL ISSUES HIGHER ED ACT SUGGESTIONS  
*Inside Higher Ed*, December 12, 2014

The federal panel tasked with advising the U.S. Department of Education on accreditation issues on Thursday released a draft set of recommendations for changing accreditation during reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

IMMIGRATION

IMMIGRATION NOT HIGH ON MCCONNELL AGENDA  
By Niels Lesniewski, *Roll Call*, December 8, 2014

The incoming Senate majority leader isn’t eager to tackle immigration after President Barack Obama’s recent executive action. While Republicans in both chambers are pushing responses to Obama, Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said in an interview Friday not to expect the sort of big immigration package that moved with bipartisan support under Democratic leadership in the current Congress.

GOP TO BRING UP BILL BLOCKING OBAMA IMMIGRATION ACTION -- NEXT YEAR  
By Matt Fuller, *Roll Call*, December 10, 2014

While it may be little consolation to conservatives, House Republicans announced their intention Wednesday to vote on an amendment — in January, when the new Congress is sworn in — that would block the president’s executive action on immigration.

INNOVATION

HIGHER EDUCATION AND INDUSTRY ORGANIZATIONS URGE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN PATENTS  
*Association of State and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) Congressional and Governmental Affairs (CGA) News*, December 11, 2014

APLU and partner higher education and industry organizations sent the attached letter today to the House and Senate Judiciary Committees as well as leadership offices on potential future consideration of patent legislation. The letter explains how the landscape on patents has changed through Supreme Court decisions and increased FTC enforcement among other developments. The developments have resulted in significant reductions in the number of
patent lawsuit filings. The letter argues that these developments must be considered if the committees are going to work on patent legislation again next year, which is likely to happen in the early months.

* This is the complete news article.

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**INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES**

**FEED THE FUTURE UP FOR VOTE**
By Ellyn Ferguson, CQ.com, December 9, 2014

Supporters are racing to get a bill (HR 5656) through the House codifying the Obama administration’s initiative to reduce hunger and boost economic development and agricultural production in selected poor countries. They want to get the bill to the Senate for action before Congress adjourns. House leaders have placed the Feed the Future legislation on the list of suspension bills it will consider this week. Bills taken up under suspension of the rules are generally noncontroversial and require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. The House can pass a bill on suspension by voice vote. The legislation would authorize $1 billion in funding for fiscal 2015 and require the administration to submit a detailed report to Congress on beneficiaries, progress and coordination by the USAID with other federal agencies such as the USDA on international food programs through 2020. The Congressional Budget Office scored the bill’s cost at $905 million over fiscal years 2015 through 2019. New Jersey Republican Christopher H. Smith, the primary sponsor, has said he is optimistic about the bill’s chances. Smith, a senior member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, has the backing of committee chairman, Ed Royce, R-Calif. Smith said the key selling points are the initiative’s focus on improving nutrition for young children in impoverished nations and helping those nations achieve food security by working with small-scale farmers to become efficient and productive. A CQ Weekly story explores some of the challenges facing U.S. efforts to help nations feed themselves.

* This is the complete news article.

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**SMITH-MCCOLLUM GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY ACT PASSES HOUSE**
Congressman Chris Smith Press Release, December 11, 2014

The House of Representatives last night passed bipartisan legislation to address global hunger and help the world’s poorest countries develop better agriculture.

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**WHITE HOUSE ENLISTS TRAVEL BLOGGERS TO GET STUDENTS TO STUDY ABROAD**
By Jessica Plautz, Mashable, December 11, 2014

The White House hosted 100 travel bloggers in a summit on Tuesday to sell them on the
government's plan to promote study abroad among U.S. students. Bloggers who attended the event — called the White House Travel Blogger Summit on Study Abroad and Global Citizenship — were largely on board with this message, which they promoted via social media Thursday, using the hashtag #StudyAbroadBecause. The National Security Council is leading the effort, and the U.S. State Department will soon open a U.S. Study Abroad Office to support initiatives that will get more college students to take their academic studies to other countries, and return home with valuable language skills and international awareness. There will be an online study-abroad fair on Feb. 25.

INTERNET POLICY

FCC PASSES $1.5 BILLION E-RATE FUNDING BOOST

The Federal Communications Commission on Thursday approved a $1.5 billion funding increase for its E-Rate program, which helps disadvantaged schools gain access to technologies and high-speed Internet.

MICHIGAN CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION

LEVIN SAYS HE’S GOING HOME
By Austin Wright, Politico’s Morning Defense, December 8, 2014

The 80-year-old Carl Levin, who's been in the Senate for 36 years and has been the top Democrat on [the Senate Armed Services Committee] SASC since 1997, tells our colleague Jeremy Herb in an exit interview he's going home when his Senate career ends and is looking into teaching and "some possible law affiliations." Here's more from Herb's interview: You don't plan on doing anything in Washington, like lobbying? "I know I'm not going to be doing any lobbying. I know that with the same certainty that I'm going home." Are you considering writing a memoir? "No, I'm doing a little oral history with the Senate historian, but I'm not planning a memoir." You've long called for an end to sequestration and proposed solutions, like closing some tax loopholes as you have pushed for. Do you think Congress can actually get its act together and reverse the cuts next year? "I'm a perennial optimist...there's such an obvious path here to end sequestration -- and I won't say it unless you're dying to hear me repeat it again. Sequestration is a threat. It's a threat to defense, and it's a threat in domestic discretionary...We couldn't even get the word comprehensive into our bill. It was in our Senate bill; we had at least some language on sequestration. We couldn't get it in -- the House absolutely refused. I think even the word bipartisan was not even acceptable." That doesn't bode well then, does it? "No it doesn't. But now the Republicans are in charge. If they want to be responsible, they're going to have to do something about sequestration. But whether they will get to the point where they realize they have to do something to close the loopholes and use some of those revenues to take the place of sequestration, I don't know."
FULL FUNDING FOR FRIB INCLUDED IN SPENDING BILL
Maureen Groppe, USA TODAY, December 10, 2014

Michigan State University’s Facility for Rare Isotope Beams would receive the full $90 million requested for continued construction under a spending bill Congress hopes to pass this week to keep the federal government running.

PRESIDENT OBAMA LAUNCHES COMPETITIONS FOR NEW MANUFACTURING INNOVATION HUBS AND AMERICAN APPRENTICESHIP GRANTS
White House Fact Sheet, December 11, 2014

Today, at a meeting of the President’s Export Council, President Obama will announce nearly $400 million to help improve the competitiveness of American businesses and workers by spurring new manufacturing innovations and giving America workers additional opportunities to improve and expand their skill sets for middleclass jobs. To help support new advancements in manufacturing, the President will announce more than $290 million in public-private investment for two new Manufacturing Innovation Hub Competitions...In addition, the President will announce $100 million to expand apprenticeships for American workers - a proven training strategy for workers to learn the skills that employers need for American businesses to grow and thrive in a competitive global environment...The Department of Defense will lead a competition for a new public-private manufacturing innovation institute in flexible hybrid electronics, combining $75 million of federal investment with $75 million or more of private investment...The Department of Energy will lead a competition for a new public-private manufacturing innovation institute focused on smart manufacturing, including advanced sensors, control, platforms, and models for manufacturing.

NOTICE OF INTENT TO ISSUE FOA ENTITLED "CLEAN ENERGY MANUFACTURING INNOVATION INSTITUTE ON SMART MANUFACTURING: ADVANCED SENSORS, CONTROLS, PLATFORMS, AND MODELING FOR MANUFACTURING"
DOE Advance Manufacturing Office (AMO) Notice of Intent to Issue a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA), December 11, 2014

The purpose of this Notice of Intent is to provide potential applicants advance notice that the AMO, on behalf of the DOE Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, intends to issue a FOA entitled "Clean Energy Manufacturing Innovation Institute on Smart Manufacturing: Advanced Sensors, Controls, Platforms, and Modeling for Manufacturing"
For an agency regularly called "adrift" without a mission, NASA will at least float through next year with a boatload of money for its science programs.

The omnibus spending package will carry a $300 million proposal to expand innovation research hubs that are part of a broader plan by President Barack Obama to promote expansion and hiring in the factory sector. Rep. Tom Reed, R-Pa., said the language from his House-passed proposal (HR 2996) would use existing funds for innovation research hubs. "We reached agreement. It's basically the House bill," said Reed, who took the lead in promoting the measure with Rep. Joseph P. Kennedy III, D-Mass. Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, has pushed for similar legislation (S 1468) in the Senate, and praised the inclusion of the House-passed measure in the spending package (HR 83). "These regional, industry-led hubs will leverage local expertise and will create thousands of high-paying, high-tech manufacturing jobs for American workers," he said. Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said the legislation could help build momentum for other efforts in the 114th Congress to provide incentives to manufacturers and to expand job training programs. "It's great stuff. It's a great start on maybe some bipartisanship next year," said Graham, co-chairman of the Senate manufacturing caucus. Obama has promoted four similar hubs over the last two years. The legislation would provide support for an unspecified additional number of centers that would be part of the National Network for Manufacturing Innovation. Each center would be backed by an alliance of companies, community colleges and universities and state and local agencies. Supporters said the measure would help encourage companies to build more domestic factories, instead of moving them offshore. Sen. Roy Blunt, R-Mo., said the measure would encourage the development of alliances of manufacturers and academic programs. For example, he said the legislation would require that each center be connected to at least two manufacturing businesses. "It will provide structure to the program," Blunt said. Obama and lawmakers in both parties have endorsed efforts to extend a rebound in the factory sector, which now accounts for 12.2 million jobs, with the addition of 700,000 jobs since 2010.

* This is the complete news article.

APLU joined other members of the Energy Sciences Coalition in sending a letter to appropriators regarding FY15 funding for the Department of Energy’s Office of Science and the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Energy. Specifically, this letter urges appropriators to place a high
priority on funding for these entities. [MSU also is one of the institutions that signed the letter.]

* This is the complete news article.

**LONG RANGE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LRRDP) REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**

*FederalBizOpps.gov, December 3, 2014*

This RFI seeks to identify current and emerging technologies and/or projections of technology-enabled concepts that could provide significant military advantage to the United States and its partners and allies in the 2030 time frame. The Department is soliciting this information to focus the study and prioritization of novel or unconventional applications of technology in ways that would provide significant, enduring capability advantage to future U.S. warfighting capabilities in conducting operations against a peer or near-peer competitor. We anticipate using this information to aid in the internal analysis and prioritization of [Department of Defense] DoD research and development investments.

**RESEARCH POLICY**

**WHAT DO HOUSE REPUBLICANS WANT FROM THE NSF?**

*By Paul Basken, The Chronicle of Higher Education, December 8, 2014*

Republicans leading the House science committee have spent much of the past two years ratcheting up the pressure on the NSF. They’ve sought information on several dozen grants awarded by the NSF. They’ve made increasingly strident attacks on some of its choices. And for several weeks now, committee representatives have been trekking out to NSF offices in Arlington, Va., to inspect grant paperwork. The oversight campaign has left researchers worried that the committee is trying to impose partisan priorities on scientific processes. But a committee aide involved in the work said the panel’s escalating pressure could ease soon. All it would take, the aide said, is for the NSF to meet a demand made by Rep. Lamar Smith of Texas, the committee’s chairman: that each new grant award include a brief summary explaining the project’s value.

**REPORT URGES SIGNIFICANT REFORMS TO IMPROVE THE TRAINING AND SALARY OF POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS**

*National Academies News Release, December 10, 2014*

A new report from the National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, and Institute of Medicine urges significant changes to improve the postdoctoral training system in the United States. The postdoctoral experience should be refocused to have training and mentoring at its center, the report says. In addition, the salaries of postdoctoral researchers should be increased to reflect more accurately the value of their training and contribution to research.
SENATE PASSES FOIA BILL
By Burgess Everett, Politico, December 8, 2014

...The Senate unanimously approved the [Freedom of Information Act] FOIA Improvement Act, sending a bill intended to create a “presumption of openness” among government agencies to the House, which passed a similar bill earlier this year...The bill makes it easier to access federal government information electronically and simpler for people to file FOIA requests.

LAWMAKERS EXPRESS ALARM ABOUT SMALL, CHEAP DRONES AND THE RISK THEY POSE

Federal lawmakers on Wednesday questioned whether the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is able to cope with an influx of small, cheap drones that are endangering air traffic, saying the agency was moving too slowly to adopt safety regulations.

WAY, WAY DOWN THE ROAD
By Heather Caygle, Politico’s Morning Transportation, December 11, 2014

Expecting a drone under the holiday tree? Well prepare to be disappointed - the devices might not be legal to fly for several years -- 2017 or later to be exact -- according to federal officials. The FAA is going to miss the 2015 deadline to issue its final commercial drone rules, and lawmakers were visibly frustrated at Wednesday's House T&I hearing. The aggravation at the delays -- Congress gave the FAA a September 2015 deadline for integrating drones into the national airspace -- was bipartisan, as were questions about the agency's selection and use of six drone test sites across the country and how the government plans to restrict drone use in the future. Aviation Subcommittee Chairman Frank LoBiondo said he was concerned about U.S. companies taking their drone research abroad because FAA regulations were too burdensome. "I can't help but wonder that if the Germans, French and Canadians can do some of these things today, then why can't we also be doing them?" he asked.

* This is the complete news article.

SEXUAL ASSAULT POLICY

SENATORS CALL FOR MORE ROBUST RESPONSE TO CAMPUS ASSAULTS
By Carolyn Phenicie, CQ.com, December 9, 2014

Law enforcement must improve its response to sexual assaults on college campuses if the problem is to be substantially reduced, senators said. A professional response by police, including crime tape and evidence vans, and by prosecutors, who can use subpoenas and grand
juries to avoid conflicts of interest that sometimes occur in campus adjudications, sends an important societal signal that assault on campus is a serious crime, said Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I. “I’m concerned that the specter of flawed law enforcement overshadows the harm of marginalized law enforcement,’’ he said at a Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism hearing on Tuesday. Yet law enforcement must respond appropriately, in conjunction with medical and mental health professionals and victims’ advocates, Whitehouse said. “When there’s no law enforcement response at all, that silence is deafening, and sends the message that what happened to the victim didn’t matter. Unfortunately, this message fits too neatly with the pressure school administrators may feel to downplay campus sexual violence,’’ he added.

There are dual systems to address campus assaults: traditional law enforcement, and the systems on campuses required by Title IX, through which schools can make accommodations such as changed class schedules or additional time to complete assignments. Victims, often guided by sexual assault survivors’ advocacy groups, have taken “almost a default’’ position that they are better off reporting just on campus through the Title IX proceedings than going to law enforcement, said Claire McCaskill, who introduced a bill (S 2692) to address the problem of assaults on campus and who testified at the hearing. Schools and law enforcement should learn from improvements made in the military, which increased reporting from 1 in 12 assaults to 1 in 4, McCaskill said. She attributed the change to devoted victims’ assistants who provide full information about the reporting options available to victims. More victims must report to law enforcement if it is to be an effective deterrent, said Republican Charles E. Grassley of Iowa. “It’s high time to make sure that a crime is a crime wherever it’s committed,’’ Grassley said. “When it’s treated universally the same way, we’ll have less rape on campus.’’ Although movement on McCaskill’s bill has stalled for the year, she said she looks forward to reintroducing the bill next year and moving it to passage. Grassley, a co-sponsor of the measure and likely the next chairman of the Judiciary Committee, said he hopes there is a “real effort’’ to work on the bill “very seriously’’ and “move it along.’’

Rolling Stone Article Raised: McCaskill and Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., who with McCaskill is leading the effort to combat sexual assault on campus, also addressed the controversy surrounding an article in Rolling Stone about an alleged gang rape at the University of Virginia and the school’s response. Details in the article have been questioned since its publication, and the alleged victim has said she wanted to back out of the article. McCaskill blamed Rolling Stone’s “bad journalism’’ for the subsequent issues surrounding the article and said is a “setback for survivors in this country.’’ “This is not a crime where you have rampant false reporting or embellishment. This is a crime that is the most underreported crime in America and will remain so. Our problem is not victims coming forward and embellishing. Our problem is victims are too frightened to come forward,’’ McCaskill said. Gillibrand, meanwhile, emphasized that the problem is not one potentially inaccurate report, but rather the response by UVA — and colleges throughout the country — to sexual assaults. “I refuse to let this one story to become an excuse for Congress not to fix this broken system,’’ she vowed.

* This is the complete news article.

LAWMAKERS CONSIDER HOW TO ADDRESS SEXUAL ASSAULT OFFENDERS TRANSFERRING COLLEGES
By Tyler Kingkade, The Huffington Post, December 10, 2104
Members of Congress are shifting more attention to the fact that students found responsible for sexual assault can transfer schools without notifying their new institution of their record.

**SOCIAL SCIENCES & THE HUMANITIES**

**STORMING THE IVORY TOWER**

All manner of treasure accumulates in the Ivory Tower, but too often that's where valuable scholarship stays locked up, obscure and inaccessible. “Free the knowledge!” might be the rallying cry behind a creative new plan from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The federal agency, which bills itself as one of the largest funders of humanities programs in the country — recently announced the Public Scholar program. Its goal is to motivate scholars to publish nonfiction books for general readers — rather than for each other.

**NO 'CREDIBLE SOLUTION' TO ENERGY, CLIMATE WITHOUT SOCIAL SCIENCE -- MONIZ**
Katherine Ling, *E&E News*, December 9, 2014

How to change people's habits or why people choose or reject solar or electric vehicles is an integral part of tackling the issues of energy and climate change and one that is integrated into Energy Department work, DOE Secretary Ernest Moniz said in a speech today. "Flat out, I have never seen a credible solution to our climate change challenges without a major demand-side contribution," Moniz said in a speech at the Behavior, Energy and Climate Change Conference held in Washington, D.C., today. "Social science can and probably must help us to do better meeting these climate and energy challenges, and we will try to keep, at least within the spirit of integration with our programs, keep ratcheting up as we understand more and more clearly what the key questions are." Moniz cited a study from the analyst firm Opower that found changing people's behaviors could add up to a 1.6 percent drop in residential energy use. "Some may think 1.6 percent is not a huge number, but it's a very big number when trying to reach climate goals of 26 percent to 28 percent by 2025" -- the U.S. carbon reduction target announced by President Obama last month in the climate agreement with China. "We all know 26 to 28 percent is a stretch, and we can see our way even without comprehensive legislation to a good fraction of that. But, boy, getting a good couple extra percent in there from things like behavioral approaches, I think that is essential, and so in that context is really quite important." Beyond just demand-side electricity use, social sciences are also important to understand the acceptance of various renewable technologies, distributed energy, vehicle and fuel choices, and "a whole set of very, very rich questions to be addressed," Moniz said. The study of people's behaviors and choices known as social science has come under serious criticism from Republicans recently, and their scrutiny is likely to increase as they fully take over Congress next year. Rep. Lamar Smith (R-Texas), chairman of the House Science, Space and Technology Committee, has led the critique and has repeatedly denounced NSF grants to social science projects including a study of public attitudes toward the Senate filibuster and oppression and
mental health in Nepal, saying there have been too many "questionable grants" and "frivolous use of taxpayer money" for social, behavioral and economic projects. The chairman zeroed out any funding increases to the NSF social sciences directorate and instead redistributed the funds to computer science, physics and other categories in a bill that would reauthorize the NSF and other science programs. On the larger climate change picture, Moniz stressed that another part of the U.S.-China climate agreement that has been somewhat overlooked is the Chinese target to bump up the share of non-fossil fuels in its primary energy consumption to 20 percent by 2030. In real terms, that means China will need to develop 10 gigawatts of non-fossil-energy capacity per month, Moniz said. "That is a very ambitious goal on the Chinese side, as well." In the United States, Moniz said that DOE plans to continue pushing hard on energy efficiency standards and that actions the agency has taken already will cut more than 3 gigatons of CO2 by 2030. DOE is only one away from reaching Moniz's goal of finalizing 10 standards this year and intends to finalize 12 more -- "possibly 13" -- in 2015. And then in 2016, "we are going to run through the tape and keep cranking it up; very, very important area."

* This is the complete news article.

SECRETARY’S FINAL SUPPLEMENTAL PRIORITIES AND DEFINITIONS FOR DISCRETIONARY GRANT PROGRAMS
Federal Register, December 10, 2014

To support a comprehensive education agenda, the Secretary of Education establishes 15 priorities and related definitions for use in any appropriate discretionary grant program for fiscal year (FY) 2015 and future years. These priorities and definitions replace the supplemental priorities for discretionary grant programs that were published in 2010 and corrected in 2011. These priorities reflect the lessons learned from implementing discretionary grant programs, as well as our current policy objectives and emerging needs in education.

STUDENT AID

CFPB BLASTS 'DEBT RELIEF' SERVICES
By Michael Stratford, Inside Higher Ed, December 12, 2014

The U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) announced Thursday that it was taking legal action against two companies offering to help students take advantage of federal loan benefits that officials said amounted to a "scam."

TAX POLICY

ASSOCIATIONS URGE PERMANENT EXTENSION OF IRA CHARITABLE ROLLOVER TAX PROVISION
Association of American Universities council on Federal Relations Update, December 10, 2014
The higher education community today sent letters to Members of the House and Senate asking them to approve the Supporting America's Charities Act (H.R. 5806), legislation to make permanent three charitable tax provisions, including the [individual retirement account] IRA charitable rollover. The House could take up the bill as early as today. The IRA charitable rollover allows individuals who have reached age 70½ to donate up to $100,000 directly from their IRAs to charitable organizations, without treating the distributions as taxable income. The legislation will be considered under suspension of the rules, despite a veto threat by the White House. The cost of the bill is not offset.

* This is the complete news article.

**HOUSE DEMS BLOCK CHARITABLE TAX BILL**

House Democrats blocked legislation on Thursday that would have permanently extended three tax credits for charitable giving, ending an effort to give nonprofits a last-minute victory...It also would have extended a provision allowing taxpayers to claim itemized deductions for charitable contributions from individual retirement accounts.