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Association

Rural Sociological
Society

Society for Research in
Child Development

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President

MEMORANDUM

TO: President-Elect Barack Obama
FROM: Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA)
SUBJECT: THE SOCIAL, BEHAVIORAL, AND ECONOMIC SCIENCES (SBE)
IN THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

Introduction:

Congratulations! Your campaign has utilized the research results from the SBE sciences, such as cognitive studies on survey and poll questions, studies of Americans' attitudes and voting behavior, and analyses of the national and world economy, to achieve your important victory. As you prepare to take office, almost all of the issues confronting your new Administration will also involve application of research outcomes from the SBE sciences. As Thomas Friedman has noted, the flattening of the world has allowed individuals to make decisions as to where to study, live and work. Understanding these individual decisions as well as their social and economic contexts should be paramount to any Administration's science and public policy agenda.

Research and researchers in the SBE sciences have fostered human progress through their contributions to public policy in a number of key areas: creating a safer world both internationally and domestically; increasing prosperity; improving health; educating the nation; protecting the environment; and promoting fairness.

In addition, in the current economic uncertainty the social and behavioral sciences will make important contributions on issues such as restructuring regulatory mechanisms, assessing the impact of economic policies on economic growth, measuring consumer behavior, and discerning the implications of tax policy changes.

SBE scientists' have increased their use of recent advancements in new research tools such as functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging and increased computational power. These have allowed for examination of brain and behavior relationships, spatial analyses as they relate to policy, the ability to combine large data sets and mine them for information, the capacity to focus on complexity in human and societal behavior, and the ability to seek answers to other important research questions.

The SBE sciences are ready to meet the challenges facing this country and the world, but only with adequate support from and the full commitment of your Administration. In the following pages, we outline the areas where the SBE sciences are making important contributions and highlight the government agencies where support for that research is necessary.

White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP)

OSTP serves a major purpose in coordinating the nation's science and technology enterprise. The head of OSTP serves as the President's key adviser on research and development.

COSSA Recommends: COSSA concurs with the rest of the scientific community and urges the early appointment of a presidential science adviser and head of OSTP. COSSA also agrees that the head of OSTP should be elevated to Cabinet status with direct access to the President.

The new director should have a keen appreciation for the contributions of the SBE sciences and their contributions to American science and public policy. He or she should revive the position of Assistant Director for the SBE Sciences. Any committee structure, such as the current National Science and Technology Council should include a separate SBE panel. The President's Council of Advisers on Science and Technology should include distinguished social/behavioral scientists who understand the importance of these sciences to America's economic and technological competitiveness.

The Basic Research Agencies

Basic research provides the seed corn upon which the nation's scientific enterprise flourishes. For the SBE sciences the key agencies are the National Science Foundation and its SBE Directorate, and the National Institutes of Health and its Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research.

National Science Foundation (NSF)

The NSF is the premier basic research agency in the world supporting studies across *all* the sciences. The America COMPETES Act calls for the doubling of the NSF budget in seven years. COMPETES includes all the sciences that NSF supports as priorities for that doubling.

The SBE Directorate at NSF is one of six research directorates. It will have a new leader in May 2009. The Directorate supports research in key interdisciplinary areas such as climate change decision-making. It supports the collection, analysis and dissemination of three longitudinal data sets – the Panel of Income Dynamics, the General Social Survey, and the American National Election Studies – that have painted a portrait of the American economic, political and social landscape over many years. The Economics program has supported 39 Nobel Prize winners. The Science, Resources, Statistics division is responsible for collecting and analyzing data on the nation's scientific and engineering enterprise and on the education of the scientific workforce, publishing the biannual Science and Engineering Indicators report. NSF also supports key research on education through its support for the Science of Learning Centers and through essential funding by its division of

Learning in Formal and Informal Settings in the Education and Human Resources Directorate.

COSSA Recommends: Fulfill the promise of the COMPETES Act and double NSF's funding across *all* the sciences it supports, including the social, behavioral, and economic sciences. Appoint SBE scientists to the National Science Board. Include the SBE sciences in all programs related to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics education.

National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Nearly 125 million Americans are living with one or more chronic conditions, like heart disease, cancer, diabetes, kidney disease, arthritis, asthma, mental illness and Alzheimer's disease. Since an Institute of Medicine report in 1982 that noted almost half of deaths are from behaviorally-related causes, the importance of behavior, life-style, and socio-economic contexts have become an ever-increasing part of the agenda for a healthy nation. Obesity, health disparities, aging and retirement, children's well-being, HIV/AIDS prevention, alcoholism and drug abuse are all areas where social and behavioral research is essential to solving the health problems of America and the world. Many health leaders have made it clear that *behavior change* underlies much of disease prevention, treatment, and cost containment.

The NIH has a strong behavioral component supporting behavioral and social science research throughout most of its 27 institutes and centers. The agency estimates it spends about ten percent of its budget on behavioral and social sciences. In 1993 Congress recognized the importance of these sciences to the nation's health and created the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) at NIH. OBSSR supports the development and application of systems integrative science approaches to study how multiple factors – behavioral, social, and biological – interact with each other and change over time to influence health. The completion of the Human Genome Project has helped us understand the genetic influences on health. We now need to focus on the gene-environment interaction that affects our well-being.

In addition, three major studies – the Health and Retirement Survey (supported by the National Institute on Aging), the Adolescent Health Survey (supported by the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development) and the new National Children's Study (in the Office of the Director) – provide excellent data for investigating many different health problems for these populations.

COSSA Recommends: Appoint a new NIH director who clearly understands the importance of social/behavioral factors on health. Continue to support social/behavioral research related to health and behavior issues. Enhance the role of the OBSSR by including it on the NIH Steering committee that focuses on NIH-wide policies and operational decisions.

Research and Statistics in the Cabinet Departments

One of the more disturbing trends in the past twenty-five years has been the erosion of support for the research and statistics agencies in the major domestic departments of the Federal government. Another concern has been protection of the independence and integrity of these agencies.

Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Rural residents and communities continue to play important social, economic, and political roles in the nation's life. In the 21st Century farming plays a role in many areas such as energy resources and food security. More importantly, sectors of the economy beyond farming underlie the long-term health of rural America and so issues such as poverty, natural resource sustainability, energy policy, and community development have become important.

More specifically, these research areas include: new directions in population change and diversity, the reshuffling and remaking of rural families, rural children at risk, rural poverty, land use, trade, rural health, rural infrastructure, schools, and transportation, economic restructuring, the rise of tourism, and natural amenity development.

The 2008 Farm Bill reconfigured research at the U.S.D.A. A new National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA) will have six major research agendas as well as a Chief Scientist to support competitive research.

COSSA Recommends: Any research agenda for Rural America must include social and economic questions. The NIFA must be led by a person who understands the changing nature of rural America and the importance of the social science research agenda. There needs to be more equitable funding for the six new research areas. In addition, the Economic Research Service and the National Agricultural Statistics Service need strong leaders and more resources.

Department of Commerce: U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)

The new Administration will take office a little more than a year from the 2010 decennial census. As a member of the 2010 Census Advisory Committee, COSSA wants to ensure that the constitutionally-mandated count is as complete and accurate as possible. There will be many roadblocks to achieving this goal. Already, the fear factor in many immigrant communities is high. The American Community Survey (ACS) exists to compile data on issues that were once part of the long-form decennial census questionnaire and provide them to states and localities for policy planning services. Other economic data collections, many collected by the BEA, are also important to the nation.

COSSA Recommends: Appoint a new Director of the Census Bureau as soon as possible. The new director must have the trust and confidence of the

Administration, the Congress, and the American people. The Bureau's efforts in outreach and advertising must be strongly supported. The continued fiscal health of the ACS must be assured and ways found to provide data to small areas that help these places while maintaining confidentiality. Given its support from seven former U.S. Census directors, the Administration should consider the recommendation to make the U.S. Census Bureau an independent agency.

The BEA, keeper of the nation's income accounts, must have strong leadership and enhanced resources so that it can complete its efforts to bring research and development activities into the GDP. Its independence and integrity must be protected.

Finally, after more than forty-five years it is time to redefine the U.S. poverty measure. Numerous congressional hearings, professional seminars, and other activities have demonstrated the need for an update. The National Academy of Sciences' Report *Measuring Poverty* demonstrates how to accomplish this. Its recommendations need implementation.

Department of Defense (DOD)

In April 2008, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates declared it was time for the Department to re-engage with the social and behavioral sciences. The Secretary noted that: "Too many mistakes have been made over the years because our government and military did not understand – or even seek to understand – the countries or cultures we were dealing with." Project Minerva was launched to implement the Secretary's vision and has led to expanded resources within DOD's basic research budget committed to the SBE sciences.

In addition, at a joint hearing held by the House Armed Services and Science and Technology Committees in May 2008, testimony was delivered about social/behavioral research regarding military families and other aspects of the U.S. defense effort. Other hearings held by the Armed Services Committee have focused on language and cultural training for U.S. troops.

COSSA Recommends: Continued expansion of DOD's efforts in the SBE sciences. The Army Research Office, the Office of Naval Research, and the Air Force Office of Scientific Research should be encouraged to enhance their efforts in understanding the human and cultural aspects of military and defense operations. More language and cultural training for U.S. troops would also be helpful.

Department of Education

Social/behavioral scientists, including education researchers, have played a major role in advancing knowledge about teaching and learning. Cognitive science has been especially productive in improving understanding of how learning occurs, particularly in reading and mathematics, and has fostered development of powerful new approaches for education. Decades of social/behavioral science research on

all aspects of early childhood and the pre-school years has supported efforts of policy makers to enact effective programs for these youngsters. Ongoing research on school organization and teacher education has manifested itself in many reform efforts being undertaken in state and local school districts. Evaluation and assessment of these programs to demonstrate what works relies on the expertise and methodologies of social/behavioral scientists. Similarly, international assessments and comparative studies have depended on the expertise of social/behavioral scientists and the support provided by the Federal government. In addition, the changing demographics of our nation's school systems make research on learning by non-traditional students imperative.

Social/behavioral scientists have also conducted important research in the higher education realm. Studies of the student aid system, escalating college costs, course and curriculum selection, including why women and minorities disproportionately eschew science courses and careers, attitudes of first year college students, and the economic value of a college education are part of a long research heritage.

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) is the Department of Education's entity focused on research, statistics, and dissemination. Authorized in 2002, the new structure has worked toward the important goal of advancing education research of the highest quality and rigor and promoting the independence and integrity of its activities.

The international education and foreign language programs of Title VI of the Higher Education Act remain a key to keeping American students in the forefront of global education. The National Academies' study *International Education and Foreign Languages: Keys to Securing America's Future* has demonstrated the importance of these programs.

The Jacob K. Javits Fellowship program, which supports graduate students in the social sciences, humanities, and arts, has seen its budget eroded during recent years as a result of across-the-board cuts in its appropriation bill.

COSSA Recommends: Continued support, with increased budgets for the research of IES and the longitudinal surveys and basic data collections of its National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Strong researchers should lead the IES and NCES. The upcoming reauthorization of IES needs to maintain the present independence of the NCES by ensuring that its director is appointed by the President with Senate confirmation.

Implement the recommendations of National Academies' report on the international education and foreign language programs, including the appointment of an Assistant Secretary for all the departments programs in these areas. Restore the Title VI and Fulbright-Hays budgets to the inflation-adjusted levels of the late 1960s. Restore the cuts to the Javits Fellowship program and enhance the number of students supported under this program.

Department of Health and Human Services

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

The CDC is the nation's primary prevention agency. The expertise of the SBE sciences is critical to America's quest to promote health, prevent disease and provide quality treatment. This research provides knowledge about the social, cultural, and economic environments that influence human health and behavior and the means by which these environments exert their influence. Applied social and behavioral science research is among the primary tools used by the CDC to understand the causes of poor health, identify the populations at risk, and develop interventions for health promotion and disease prevention. Any response to a health pandemic will involve SBE research in communication and mass behavior.

The CDC's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is the nation's principal health statistics agency. The Center provides critical data on all aspects of our health care system by collecting and analyzing data through the Health Interview Survey (HIS) and the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES). Both of these important data collections have suffered from insufficient resources in recent years.

NCHS' data allows us to: monitor the capacity and performance of the U.S. health care system, including tracking waiting times in emergency departments and measuring unmet health care needs; understand the trends in the use of health care services, as well as the extent to which new medical technology is adopted, and the burden placed on the health care system by individual diseases; focus policy and health programs on issues of greatest importance by providing a credible, scientific basis for understanding the magnitude of problems, and by helping generate hypotheses for health services and biomedical research; and measure and understand differentials between different groups in the population, including racial and ethnic differences in health, in order to help identify strategies for narrowing these gaps.

In recent years, NCHS, funded primarily through the Public Health Service evaluation set-aside, has lost its visibility, particularly in budgetary deliberations, as CDC's current leadership has buried it in a bureaucratic restructuring.

COSSA Recommends: Appoint a CDC director who clearly understands the importance of social/behavioral factors for prevention. Restore the NCHS' visibility and increase its resources so that the HIS and NHANES can remain important sources of our nation's health information.

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)

AHRQ supports research to improve health care quality, reduce costs, advance patient safety, decrease medical errors, and broaden access to essential services. AHRQ provides policy makers with information needed to make educated decisions about our health care and the capacity to monitor and evaluate system

changes on access, cost, and use of health care services. For example, AHRQ's *National Healthcare Disparities Report* tracks disparities in both quality of and access to health care in the United States and monitors the nation's annual progress toward eliminating these disparities. Similarly, AHRQ's Effective Health Care Program—which evaluates the comparative effectiveness of medical treatments—has already demonstrated its potential to help inform patient and provider decisions. AHRQ research and data will play an important role in any attempt to revamp the nation's healthcare system.

COSSA Recommends: Provide sufficient resources that are dedicated to enhancing AHRQ's efforts to support research designed to improve health care quality, reduce costs, advance patient safety, decrease medical errors, and broaden access to essential services.

Policy Research

The Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (APSE) is the principal advisor to the Secretary of Health and Human Services on policy development. The ASPE office also conducts and supports policy research, evaluation and economic analysis. It also funds the national and regional poverty centers. ASPE is funded almost exclusively by the Public Health Service Evaluation set-aside. It has supported social science research that led to the enactment of welfare reform and has sponsored studies evaluating the impact of that reform. ASPE has also played a significant role in analyzing health care reforms, and many federal programs affecting children, youth and families.

COSSA Recommends: Strengthen this office and its ability to conduct and support important research and evaluation studies by appointing a strong researcher as its leader and providing additional funding for its activities.

Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

Terrorists are people and terrorism is an act of behavior. The social and behavioral sciences have a strong role to play in keeping our nation safe. The Department of Homeland Security's Center of Excellence for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), housed at the University of Maryland, has been conducting important studies into terrorist group formation and recruitment, terrorist group persistence and dynamics, and societal responses to terrorist threats and attacks. In addition, many of the other Centers of Excellence have SBE components. SBE scientists have also conducted important research on detecting deception and continue to monitor attitudes towards America in nations across the globe.

The DHS has also recognized the significance of human factors regarding terrorism and other extreme events by creating a division with its Science and Technology Directorate to focus on social and behavioral issues. It also continues to support undergraduate scholarships and graduate fellowships for students across all fields including the social and behavioral sciences.

COSSA Recommends: Maintain support for the Centers of Excellence. Appoint a leader for the Science and Technology Directorate who appreciates the importance of the social and behavioral contexts of terrorism and one who understands the human dimensions of disasters. Implement the recommendations in the 2006 National Research Council report, *Facing Hazards and Disasters*. Invest in developmental science to better understand the early roots of terrorism, and inform interventions that disrupt the recruitment of young people into those pathways.

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

The Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R) at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has undergone tough times in the past two decades. Its budget has declined, its focus has scattered from its core functions, and its ability to fulfill its research support, data collection and analysis mission has deteriorated. The American Housing Survey, the basic study of our nation's housing stock, is a shadow of its former self, with sample sizes so reduced that the San Francisco Bay Area is not in the sample. As the nation continues to undergo a housing crisis, research, evaluation, and data collection become even more important.

The National Academies' has recently released a report: *Rebuilding the Research Capacity at HUD*. The report concluded that PD&R should: conduct regular, rigorous evaluations of all HUD programs; develop a more systematic internal research agenda and conduct more large-scale, high-impact studies that answer basic policy questions; produce enhanced surveys more closely related to programs and more publicly available administrative data sets; and disseminate its research products more effectively. It also needs enhanced resources. The report also suggests that PD&R has been relegated to the backwater of HUD and that Department leadership had not taken a great interest in the office.

COSSA Recommends: Implementing the National Academies' report's recommendations to revive PD&R should be a priority of the next HUD Secretary.

Department of Justice: National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS)

Preserving domestic tranquility is one of the constitution's reasons for a federal government. Although most of the activity in the criminal justice system occurs at the state and local levels, there is a major Federal role for this activity. Aside from the FBI, the Federal Prison system, the Federal Courts, and support for state and local law enforcement, the Federal government has the important responsibility of supporting research and data collection, analysis and dissemination.

The social and behavioral sciences have contributed significant insights into how to measure crime, the causes of criminal behavior, the careers of criminals, and youth violence. Hot spots, COMPSTAT, community policing, and other crime

fighting activities have developed from research conducted by SBE scientists. The crucial issue of prisoner reentry has been the focus of many recent research and evaluation efforts.

The research and statistics arms of the Department of Justice are NIJ and the BJS. Both agencies are currently the subjects of reviews by National Academy of Sciences' panels of distinguished scientists and practitioners. The BJS panel has issued a preliminary report calling for the improvement of the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), a major resource for compiling crime and victim data.

COSSA Recommends: The research and statistics efforts at DOJ need restructuring. Right now NIJ and BJS sit in the Office of Justice Programs (OJP). This is not a good situation as they are budgetarily and bureaucratically co-mingled with state and local law enforcement assistance programs. We recommend the establishment of a new Assistant Attorney General for Research, Statistics, and Technology that will protect the integrity and independence of DOJ's efforts, which in recent years have been too easily compromised through political pressures. These activities also need enhanced resources.

Cross-Cutting Issues

There are a number of issues that cut across many departments and agencies. COSSA highlights two where SBE scientists have played and will continue to play crucial roles.

Climate Change

The consensus has finally arrived that climate change is something any new Administration must confront, which means new global agreements will be negotiated and implemented. Social and behavioral scientists have been focused on the human dimensions of global climate change for a long time. Numerous National Academies' reports as well as the International Panel on Climate Change have recognized the importance of human activity and social and behavioral research on this topic. NSF has begun a program called the Dynamics of Coupled Human and Natural Systems, an interdisciplinary activity supporting research on environmental questions. It has also supported, along with the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), research on decision making under uncertainty. A large amount of work has occurred on land use and land cover issues, particularly with regard to agricultural usage and outputs. In addition, any post-Kyoto agreement will rely on SBE work on international politics, negotiating strategies that go back to game theory, and economic theory on incentives for behavior change.

COSSA Recommends: Maintain support for research activity relating to the human dimensions of global climate change, particularly at NOAA and EPA. Appoint SBE scientists to positions in the government and on advisory committees

that make policies in this important arena. Direct all mission agencies in the U.S. Climate Change Research Plan to allocate funds to the human dimensions of climate change.

Ethical, Legal, and Social Implications Research and Activities

Legislation establishing the Human Genome Project, the National Nanotechnology Initiative, and the Information Technology Research Initiative all recognized the importance of conducting research on the ethical, legal and social implications (ELSI) of these new discoveries and technologies. The research has already led to legislation in the area of genetic discrimination, the digital divide, and a renewed focus on environmental health and safety issues.

The Code of Federal Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) needs to be understood and implemented with a fuller appreciation of what constitutes ethical conduct in all fields of science. The Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) in the Department of Health and Human Services is the major governmental entity with responsibility for education, compliance, policy, and guidance. Leadership from OHRP could far better align the responsible and ethical conduct of research with continued advancements in the human sciences. The implementation of the 45CFR46 and possible reforms and reinterpretations are of considerable interest to the SBE community and furthermore are domains where the SBE sciences bring substantial scientific and ethical expertise.

COSSA Recommends: Enhance support for ELSI research across the government with regard to new technologies. Ensure that the director of OHRP understands that human research protection in the SBE sciences needs to be better aligned with the methods and practices in these sciences rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all approach to requirements. Any advisory committees should have a significant presence from the SBE sciences.

Conclusion

Unprecedented challenges await your new Administration in all facets of American life. The social, behavioral, and economic sciences have contributed much to the nation through both basic and applied research. It is now time for the nation to utilize such expertise in support of public policies that will create a safer world, increase prosperity, improve health, educate the nation, protect the environment, and most importantly, promote fairness and respect. COSSA and the organizations it represents are fully committed to assisting you and your new Administration in these endeavors.

CONSORTIUM OF SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

GOVERNING MEMBERS

American Association for Public Opinion Research
American Economic Association
American Educational Research Association
American Historical Association
American Political Science Association
American Psychological Association
American Society of Criminology
American Sociological Association
American Statistical Association

Association of American Geographers
Association of American Law Schools
Law and Society Association
Linguistic Society of America
Midwest Political Science Association
National Communication Association
Rural Sociological Society
Society for Research in Child Development

MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS

American Agricultural Economics Association
American Association for Agricultural Education
Association for Asian Studies
Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management
Association of Research Libraries
Council on Social Work Education
Eastern Sociological Society
International Communication Association
Justice Research and Statistics Association
Midwest Sociological Society
National Association of Social Workers
National Council on Family Relations

North American Regional Science Council
North Central Sociological Association
Population Association of America
Social Science History Association
Society for Behavioral Medicine
Society for Research on Adolescence
Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues
Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality
Sociologists for Women in Society
Southern Political Science Association
Southern Sociological Society
Southwestern Social Science Association

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

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University of California, Davis
University of California, Irvine
University of California, Los Angeles
University of California, San Diego
University of California, Santa Barbara
Carnegie-Mellon University
University of Chicago
Clark University
Columbia University
Cornell University
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CENTERS AND INSTITUTES

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American Council of Learned Societies
American Institutes for Research
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Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences
Cornell Institute for Social and Economic Research
Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan

Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research
Institute for Women's Policy Research
National Bureau of Economic Research
National Opinion Research Center
Population Reference Bureau
Social Science Research Council