

AAG Washington Monitor

AAG Urges Increases for Geography and Related Fields at NSF

Feeding off the momentum of the State of the Union Address, in which President Bush urged funding increases for science education and research, Rep. Bart Gordon (D-TN), Ranking Member on the House Science Committee, has been pushing a trilogy of pro-science bills he recently introduced.

One of Gordon's bills, the *Sowing the Seeds Through Science and Engineering Research Act* (H.R. 4596), calls for a ten percent increase per year in funding for basic research in the physical, mathematical, and engineering sciences at federal agencies such as the National Science Foundation. The bill would provide up to 200 new awards per year to early-career researchers and would create a graduate fellowship program for individuals pursuing studies in areas of national need.

Gordon recently held a briefing on his bills for Washington-area scientific community leaders, which was attended by representatives of the AAG. While many of those present were supportive of Gordon's legislation, some were concerned by the excessive focus on the physical sciences. Accordingly, AAG Executive Director Doug Richardson and I sent a letter to Gordon to praise his efforts on behalf of science, but also to stress the need to provide substantial increases for the social and behavioral sciences. We noted that:

The Foundation's Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE) supports fundamental research on human cognition, behavior, social structures and social interaction, as well as studies on intellectual and social contexts that govern the development and use of science and technology. Research supported by SBE over the past decades has resulted in substantial advances in our under-

standing of human and social development, and of key social and economic institutions and indicators.

Within SBE, the Geography and Regional Science Program encourages research into the nature, causes, and consequences of human activity and natural environmental processes across a range of scales. The program also supports cutting-edge research in the geographic information sciences, which the Department of Labor recently designated one of the three most important emerging and evolving high growth industries in the United States. In addition, several geographers have received funding from NSF for rapid response research on the Hurricane Katrina disaster and the affected Gulf Coast areas.

Science funding is expected to remain a hot topic on Capitol Hill this year. We will keep you apprised of any key developments. ■

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