

Washington Monitor

CR Signed Into Law; FY 2008 Funding Levels Frozen Until March 6, 2009

On September 30, 2008, President Bush signed into law a federal continuing funding resolution (CR) that freezes Fiscal Year 2008 appropriation levels until March 6, 2009. The passage of the CR means that Congress will not have to reconvene in a "lame-duck" session after the election to act on federal appropriations – but it may return nonetheless to consider various economic stimulus measures.

The lengthy term of the CR can be viewed as both a positive and negative for geographic research funding. On the one hand, the key science agencies, including the National Science Foundation (NSF), will not receive increased funding until Fiscal Year 2009 appropriations are enacted. This is a blow in that science policy community leaders were expecting NSF and the other research agencies to receive significant increases. But on the flip side, the delay does mean that Congress will be able to negotiate the FY 09 appropriations with the new administration – either Barack Obama or John McCain. This should give research

advocates in the House and the Senate some leverage to seek increased funding. We will keep you apprised as the situation develops.

House Bill Authorizes Energy Studies by High-Ranking Geographer

In late September, the House Administration Committee favorably reported a bill that would authorize the chamber's Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to perform several key studies aimed at saving energy in House operations. The legislation is now before the full House – but may not be considered until the new 111th Congress convenes in January.

The bill (H.R. 6474) is significant to geography in that the current CAO is Daniel P. Beard – a PhD in geographer with an extensive background in managing environmental issues. As CAO, Beard was appointed directly by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and oversees the Speaker's "Green the Capitol" environmental initiative. (For a full account of Beard's appointment as CAO, please see the Washington Monitor column in the July/August 2007 AAG Newsletter.)

Specifically, the legislation would "authorize the Chief Administrative Office of the House of Representatives to carry out a series of demonstration projects to promote the use of innovative technologies in reducing energy consumption and promoting energy efficiency and cost savings in the House of Representatives." The bill also calls on the CAO to issue a report on each completed demonstration project – including an "analysis of the extent to which the project" was successful. The legislation authorizes annual appropriations of up to \$5 million to carry out the projects.

The bill would have to be passed by both the House and Senate and signed into law by the President before Beard could begin work on the projects. While the 110th Congress may reconvene to consider economic stimulus actions, it is unlikely that H.R. 6474 will be acted on in a lame-duck session. If that is indeed the case, the legislation would have to be reintroduced next year. Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-CA) is the bill's chief sponsor. ■

John Wertman
jwertman@aag.org