

## **AAG Resolution re. Recent Prohibition of National Science Foundation Funding for Political Science Research (Coburn Amendment)**

The Association of American Geographers, acting through its Executive Committee and National Council, strongly condemns the recent prohibition of National Science Foundation (NSF) funding for political science research. This prohibition poses a threat to academic freedom and undermines the federal government's ability to fund important projects on topics, such as the effectiveness of institutions within our political systems or how the public perceives and reacts to events of civic importance. For example, funding from the NSF's Political Science program helped support Nobel Laureate Elinor Ostrom, whose work on the governance of common-pool resources, was awarded the 2009 Nobel Prize in Economics.

The Act allows for an exemption. It is important that some political science research is funded, however, in its current form the exemption limits the range of topics for research and undermines the scholarly peer review process. Requiring the NSF Director to publish a statement certifying the reasoning for any study funded constrains NSF officials' ability to support recent and ground-breaking research in the field.

The rationale for this exemption is short-sighted. History is replete with examples of research results that were disregarded or not-well understood when first published but later found to have significant impacts on related or unconnected topics. Research that may not be certified as promoting our national security or economic interests in 2013 may well have significant impacts on these areas of import in future years.

The Association also urges the restoration of funding for research budgets across all of the NSF's Social, Behavioral, and Economic (SBE) Sciences programs, including for political science research. The SBE Directorate, including the Geography and Spatial Sciences (GSS) program, funds a wide variety of critical studies on human actions and behavior. In recent years, GSS has funded cutting-edge research on nature-society relations and environmental change and resource management; on conflict resolution and boundary and border studies; on geography and geographic information science topics leading to key breakthroughs for geographic technologies, such as integrated geographic information systems (GIS) and global positioning systems (GPS); as well as in other vital research areas.

The AAG thus unreservedly supports the American Political Science Association (APSA) and the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) in their efforts to resist this assault on the integrity of academic research.