I am writing with respect to recent concerns expressed to the Association by a number of members regarding the amendment to the US Senate Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act of 2013, proposed by Senator Coburn (R-OK) to the Mikulski-Shelby Amendment (SA 26) to H.R. 933, and passed on March 20, 2013. The amendment places unprecedented restrictions on Federally funded social science research by allowing only political science research that promotes "national security or the economic interests of the United States."

I fully share these members’ concerns about this development: Such actions make very explicit an intention to impose political/ideological conditionality on academic research, which has become an increasingly disturbing trend in the US and Canada. I have been in consultation with Doug Richardson and John Wertman in the AAG DC office (John being our DC liaison), and with the presidents and executive directors of the American Political Science Association (APSA) and the American Sociological Association (ASA), to learn as much as I can about what is being done and what can/should be done.

There is an important context to all of this: The AAG has worked closely for over a decade with colleagues at the AAAS, the AAU, the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA), the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), the Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF), and many others, in responding to numerous threats to federal research funding for the social sciences, and indeed all scientific disciplines. These activities, summarized by John Wertman in his initial response to Professor Anna Secor’s inquiry, are reported on regularly in the ‘Washington Monitor’ segment of the AAG Newsletter. It is also important to recognize that the AAG, like its cognate academic associations, has a non-profit status that extremely limits the Association from political lobbying directed at individual pieces of legislation.

Since March 20, AAG actions with respect to the Coburn Amendment include:

- A central role in shaping the response of COSSA, an advocacy organization promoting attention to and Federal funding for the social and behavioral sciences in Washington. COSSA is very concerned and active on this issue; Doug Richardson is a member of its Executive Committee.
- Regular communication with APSA, to coordinate efforts. (See the letter attached from Michael Brintnall, executive director of the APSA.) APSA believes that the best way to remedy the situation they find themselves in is to work through the political process to try to gain support for restoring the funding for political science at NSF, and has requested that the AAG urge its members to meet with their local Congressional representatives to make their concerns known.
- The anticipated result of these actions is a joint response, including a letter to Congressional leaders from dozens of organizations, and a coordinated plan for media and grass-roots activists, in addition to ongoing legislative activities on Capitol Hill.
- A formal statement from the Association, opposing the Congressional actions against political science, will be discussed for action during the AAG Council meeting April 7-8.
If you have any suggestions of further actions and strategies for the Association to consider, please contact Doug Richardson and John Wertman, who I know are keen to hear members' ideas. Personally, I know too little about beltway politics to say what is most effective there, but I do know something about social activism, and this is where AAG members have the opportunity, indeed responsibility, to do their part in fighting such developments. Effective social action is multi-valent and multi-scalar; local activism does make a difference. Contacting your representatives and senators can be important, particularly when you are not preaching to the converted: There is a reason why online advocacy organizations ask us to make these calls when push comes to shove. Another local strategy, currently under consideration by the ASA, is bringing local and national social scientists (and if possible a local business leader) to meetings in the district offices of strategic members of congress to discuss why social science research is vital in their terms. Our regional AAG associations could also play an important role in this regard.

No doubt, there are many more smart ideas out there for the Association to tap into, both for this particular challenge, and for future ones. Again, please do not hesitate to make suggestions, but also offer your time and take actions that you think will work in your communities. As for any collective action, in the final analysis the Association’s strength stems from the commitments of its individual members.