Traditionally, June and July are busy months on Capitol Hill. The federal government fiscal year (FY) ends on September 30; thus, the House and Senate Appropriations Committees “mark up” the 12 appropriations bills and bring them to the floor for consideration by both chambers. However, in this election year, progress on the FY 2009 bill has come to a temporary halt. The only funding bill signed into law, thus far, is a supplemental appropriations bill, which provided emergency funding for the Defense Department and several other federal agencies, including over $200 million for the Census Bureau, in this current fiscal year.

After considering most of the 12 appropriations bills at the subcommittee level, congressional leaders suspended final action on most of the FY 2009 appropriations bills until early next year. At press time, the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, Congressman David Obey (D-WI), suggested Congress would finish only the Defense Appropriations bill, making it the vehicle for a continuing resolution (CR) to fund the federal government until after a new Administration has taken office. Typically, CRs hold constant, or flat fund, agencies budgets. Some exceptions in the CR will be necessary though, particularly for the Census Bureau, which is preparing for the constitutionally mandated 2010 Decennial Census. Numerous advocacy organizations are hopeful the CR will allow other agencies, including the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Science Foundation (NSF), to be funded at levels above their Fiscal Year 2008 marks.

Despite the lack of progress, the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees of primary interest to the PAA have passed their bills and prepared reports. In reports accompanying both the House and Senate versions of the FY 2009 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill, there is language complimenting the National Institute on Aging (NIA) and National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) for their support of demographic research. At press time, only the Senate report, 110-410, was available to the public.¹

The Senate report language encourages NIA to continue supporting the Demography of Aging centers program and the demographic and economic components of the Roybal Centers with contributions from the NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Science Research and NIH Office of AIDS Research. With respect to NICHD, report language

¹ In June, after passage at the subcommittee level, the House FY 2009 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations report was circulated broadly to various coalitions. However, the report is embargoed officially until the full House Appropriations Committee marks up the subcommittee’s version of the bill. Likewise, other House Appropriations reports have not been posted officially yet either.
congratulates the Institute for completing its long-range planning study, “Future Directions for the Demographic and Behavioral Sciences Branch,” and asks NICHD to continue supporting a balanced portfolio that includes investigator-initiated research and large-scale databases.

Once the House version of the FY 2009 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations report is public, the House and Senate report language will be posted on the PAA Government and Public Affairs home page.

**Appropriations Highlights**

**National Institutes of Health (NIH)**

The Senate Appropriations Committee rejected the Administration’s request to flat fund NIH in FY 2009 and instead recommended the agency receive an increase of over $1 billion, bringing its total to $30.2 billion. If ultimately enacted, that amount would allow NIH funding to keep up with the biomedical inflation rate (3.5 percent) for the first time in 6 years. It would also increase the estimated number of new, competing research project grants to 10,471—the most ever at NIH. Further, the Senate Appropriations Committee recommended that the National Children’s Study receive $192 million in 2009, thereby rejecting, once again, the Administration’s proposal to terminate the study. The House Appropriations Committee recommended NIH receive $30.3 billion, $125 million more than the level recommended by the Senate Appropriations Committee.

As part of the Fiscal Year 2008 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act, H.R. 2642, which the President signed into law on June 30, NIH received an additional $150 million. In September, when Congress begins drafting a second FY 2008 supplemental appropriations bill, Senators Harkin (D-IA) and Specter (R-PA) will be working with the Appropriations Committee leadership to provide NIH with another $500 million. If adopted in the final version of the bill, this funding would be used to “restore some of the purchasing power of NIH that was lost because of inflation in the past five years and allow NIH to award at least 700 new research project grants.” (Senator Bryd press release, July 30, 2008)

**National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS)**

Unlike last year when the Administration recommended flat funding NCHS at the agency’s FY 2007 level, the President recommended the agency receive a ten percent increase in FY 2009 to bolster the agencies core programs. Fortunately, the Senate and House Appropriations Committees have recommended NCHS receive this amount. This funding ensures the un-interrupted collection of vital statistics and other important data collection and analysis initiatives, including over-sampling of vulnerable populations in the NHANES, and enables NCHS to modernize its systems to increase efficiency, interoperability, and security.

**Census Bureau**

The administration proposed $2.6 billion for the Census Bureau in FY 2009, doubling the FY 2008 budget of $1.3 billion. This number reflects the second most expensive year in
the $11.5 billion ten-year life cycle of the budget culminating in the 2010 Decennial Census. In June, the Administration requested an additional $546 million to support its plans to return to a paper-based NRFU and complete work on the handheld computers to validate household addresses. The Senate approved this additional amount, but the House Appropriations Committee did not; thus, the issue will have to be resolved when a final FY 09 funding level is adopted early next year.

The FY 2008 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act included $210 million the Census Bureau in this fiscal year to continue its contract with Harris Corporation.

**National Science Foundation (NSF)**
The administration proposed $ 6.8 billion in FY 2009, a 14 percent increase over the FY 2008 appropriated amount. The House and Senate Appropriations Committee have recommended meeting the President’s level. As part of the FY 2008 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act, NSF received an additional $62.5 million.

**United States Agency for International Development**
The President’s budget proposes $425 million for international reproductive health/family planning programs from which the Office of Population and Reproductive Health is supported. This request is 50 percent below the account’s high-water funding level in 1995. Once again, Congress rejected the Administration’s request. The Senate State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee recommended a total of $520 million from all accounts for family planning and reproductive health programs, while the House recommended $600 million.

**American Time Use Survey**
Both the House and Senate Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bills recommended increasing the Bureau of Labor Statistics budget by almost $6 million. The reports accompanying the bill also included language favorable to the American Time Use Survey and said sufficient funds had been provided to maintain the survey in its current form and rejecting the Administration’s proposal to terminate the study.

**Other News**

**2008 Coalition for National Science Funding Capitol Hill Exhibit**

On June 25, Dr. Duncan Thomas, Duke University, represented PAA and APC at the 14th Annual Coalition for National Science Funding Capitol Exhibition in Washington, DC. The purpose of the event was to educate members of Congress, congressional staff and other federal employees about the breadth and significance of scientific research supported by the National Science Foundation.

Dr. Thomas presented his work on the social and economic effects of the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, focusing on the population in Sumatra, Indonesia. His work has
important implications for understanding the diagnosis and duration of post-traumatic stress reactivity.

More information about the CNSF exhibit is available at: http://www.cnsfweb.org/

**NIH Acts to Implement Enhanced Peer Review**

On June 6, two NIH working groups presented findings from their yearlong examination of current NIH peer-review processes. Lawrence Tabak, DDS, Ph.D., Director of the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, and Jeremy Berg, Ph.D., Director of the National Institute of General Medical Sciences, presented the implementation plan for enhanced peer review at the meeting of the NIH's Advisory Committee to the Director (ACD).

NIH announced that it would begin to implement the recommendations, which address four major priorities:

- **Engage the Best Reviewers.** NIH proposes to attract these individuals by increasing flexibility of service, formally acknowledging reviewer efforts, better compensating time and effort, and enhancing and standardizing training. The implementation plan proposes to allow reviewers who serve for a minimum of 18 full study section meetings to apply for an administrative supplement of up to $250,000 or to be considered for the agency's distinguished MERIT or Javits awards.

- **Improve Quality and Transparency of Reviews.** Shorten and redesign applications to highlight impact and to allow alignment of the application, review and summary statement with 5 explicit review criteria, and modify the rating system. The new R01 application will be 12 pages, with an optional 8-page appendix.

- **Ensure Balanced and Fair Reviews Across Scientific Fields and Career Stages.** The plan proposes to fund within the NIH Roadmap a minimum number of early stage investigators and investigators new to NIH by creating an investigator-initiated "Transformative R01 Award" program with an intended minimum commitment of $250 million over 5 years. The plan also suggests investing at least $750 million in the Pioneer, EUREKA, and New Innovator Awards programs over the next 5 years.

- **Continuously Review Peer Review.** The plan proposes that NIH develop a permanent process to continuously evaluate peer review.

Implementation of the recommendations will occur over the next 18 months.

**PAA Honors Champions of Health Services Research and Health Data**

On June 9, the PAA and APC joined other organizations to sponsor a reception organized by Academy Health to honor policymakers who have supported federal agencies and
programs that produce health data. The honorees included Dr. Edward Sondick, Director, National Center for Health Statistics, Dr. Carolyn Clancy, Director, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, and key congressional staff from the House and Senate Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee.

For more information about PAA Government and public affairs activities, you can visit the public and government affairs link on the PAA home page or email Mary Jo Hoeksema or Juliane Baron at paaapc@crosslink.net.