Congress Must Support All Sciences
American Psychological Association (APA) 2016 Briefing Sheet (FY 2017)

“Every major issue facing modern society and every major issue facing our economic competitiveness will ultimately be multidisciplinary in nature...[requiring] the integration of the physical sciences or biological sciences with the social and behavioral sciences.”

Dr. Alan Leshner, former CEO, American Association for the Advancement of Science

APA thanks Congress for adopting the Bipartisan Budget Agreement, a Fiscal Year 2016 budget that allowed for spending growth in defense and non-defense accounts, and for the FY 2016 funding boost to most science agencies in the omnibus spending bill.

- The $32 billion budgeted for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) will provide crucial new funding for initiatives on Alzheimer’s disease and precision medicine. The $2 billion spending increase was much needed.

- The National Science Foundation (NSF) budget was increased by $120 million to $7.46 billion, but significantly, NSF’s Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate was held to spending at the FY 2015 level. The SBE directorate was the only part of NSF that was prohibited from receiving an increase.

Specific Threats to the Social and Behavioral Sciences

- The House passed H.R. 1806, the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act, on May 20, 2015. APA strongly opposed HR 1806. Contrary to previous COMPETES legislation, which set authorizing guidelines for the National Science Foundation’s (NSF’s) overall research funding level, Title 1 of H.R. 1806 authorized NSF’s research directorates individually. In doing so, the bill slashed authorization levels in both Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017 for NSF’s smallest directorate, the Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE), by almost 45%.

- Members of Congress have introduced amendments to earlier legislation, and are likely to do so again, singling out SBE for elimination or further drastic reductions, and/or attacking individual, peer-reviewed grants funding social and behavioral scientists. We urge members of Congress to resist any calls to defund particular scientific disciplines or projects.
Congress Must Counter Current Attacks on Science

APA Asks Congress to Take These Actions

Past Congresses – including members of both chambers and all political affiliations – have taken a strong stand for science in the face of challenges even greater than those you face today. APA and its 122,500 members and affiliates across the country urge the current Congress to stand for science by:

- Providing predictable and steady spending increases in FY 2017 for scientific agencies, the budgets of many of which have been flat-funded and eroded by inflation for a number of years. Congress should appropriate a minimum of $8 billion for NSF and $34.6 billion for NIH in FY 2017.

- Supporting an end to sequestration and taking a balanced approach to deficit reduction that does not rely solely on spending cuts. Although the Bipartisan Budget Act provides much needed boosts to the federal science agencies for FY 2016 and 2017, sequestration returns in 2018, jeopardizing the sustainability of these increases.

- Opposing cuts to NSF’s SBE Directorate in the Senate version of COMPETES legislation and in any conference report, as well as opposing any amendments that single out social and behavioral science projects for cuts or additional or different standards of review from the rest of the Foundation.

- Calling on the Senate to be a more appropriate steward of the nation’s scientific enterprise, through its companion bills reauthorizing and appropriating funds to NSF. Senate COMPETES and CJS bills should not authorize NSF Directorates individually and should not cut funding to vital research addressing human behavior.

- Ensuring that COMPETES supports merit review. Legislative vehicles should NOT restrict the NSF’s mission to fund basic research in all scientific disciplines under the guise of “improving” the merit review system while actually imposing politically-motivated, scientifically inappropriate, and unnecessarily duplicative regulatory layers.

The American Psychological Association (APA) is a scientific and professional organization of more than 122,500 psychologists and affiliates. For more information, please contact Dr. Heather Kelly at 202.336.5932 or hkelly@apa.org.