Science Policy News

Budget Battles Under Way with House, Senate, and the Administration Not on the Same Page

The budget battles for fiscal year (FY) 2014 have begun with the House, Senate, and Administration once again out of sync and working with very different budget targets. The biggest point of contention is sequestration: the House wants to keep it, the White House wants to undo it, and the Senate is somewhere in the middle. This scenario sets up for a battle royal in the fall when the FY 2014 budget will be finalized.

Sequestration mandates an overall budget cap and also requires caps for defense and non-defense discretionary (NDD) spending. Essentially, the House is working under the overall budget cap, but with a twist; House Appropriations Chair Harold Rogers (R-KY) announced the defense pot will receive a $28 billion increase above the budget sequester cap, which would result in even greater cuts to NDD (including funding for our sciences) for FY 2014. In short, should the House prevail in its budget approach, we could see NDD funding drop to 28% BELOW the FY 2010 levels!

The Senate, meanwhile, working with Senate Appropriations Chair Barbara Mikulski (D-MY), is choosing to ignore the binding sequestration budget caps imposed by the Budget Control Act of 2011. If/when the FY 2014 spending bills hit the Senate floor, any senator can raise a point of order and stop the process in its tracks, and this is very likely to occur.

Last April, the Obama Administration rolled out its budget request for FY 2014 with large (i.e., unrealistic) increases for NDD agencies. As much as the scientific community likes to see support for research, the Obama budget completely ignores sequestration and, because of this, has little hope of being realized. Concerned with the direction taken by the House in its FY 14 budget development, the White House is now threatening to veto those spending bills seen as harmful, including those recommending major cuts to NDD.

United to Protect Science Funding

So what does all this mean for science? In short, our sciences are in jeopardy. Recognizing the urgency of taking action, ASA, CSSA, and SSSA are an active part of a larger community fighting to protect science funding. NDD United is a campaign representing 3,200