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CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE  NEW

Both the House and Senate are out of session for the July 4 recess.

The Senate will return to session on Monday, July 7, and resume consideration of a housing bill (H.R. 3221), with a cloture vote expected early in the evening. That action will be followed the next day with further consideration of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (H.R. 6304), which may be followed later in the week by consideration of legislation to prevent a Medicare physicians pay cut (H.R. 6331).

The House returns to session on Tuesday, July 8. CongressDaily reports that the chamber may consider the FY09 Military Construction-Veterans Affairs appropriations bill and a measure that addresses the effort by Oversight and Government Reform Chairman Henry Waxman (D-CA) to subpoena White House e-mails.

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

DOD, NSF AGREE TO COLLABORATE ON SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH RELATED TO NATIONAL SECURITY

The Department of Defense (DOD) and the National Science Foundation (NSF) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that will "allow researchers to apply for grants to study subjects that may be of interest to U.S. national security," according to an NSF press release issued on July 2.

The press release notes that funding for research projects will be determined on a case-by-case basis. "DoD will consider supporting proposals submitted to regular NSF programs managed by SBE [the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate]. In return, DoD will get the gold standard for the U.S. peer review process ensuring the research meets specific criteria for intellectual merit and broader impact."
An erroneous press report earlier this week asserted that the MOU would affect the current solicitation for research proposals by the DOD Minerva Research Initiative (see CFR Update 08-#46, 06-17-08). AAU staff has spoken with DOD and NSF officials, who have indicated that there will NOT be a joint DOD-NSF solicitation for Minerva funded research projects for this award cycle. Researchers interested in Minerva-funded research should respond to the current DOD broad agency announcement.

AAU staff will provide additional information about the MOU, as well as any potential implications for the Minerva program, as it becomes available.

**FEDERAL HUMAN RESEARCH OFFICE CONSIDERS REQUIRING TRAINING OF FACULTY AND IRB’S**

The Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) is requesting public comment on whether it should require universities to “implement training and education programs” for investigators, staff, certain administrators, and members of institutional review boards (IRB’s). The solicitation of comments by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) agency was printed in the July 1 Federal Register.

The OHRP notice says that current rules that strongly recommend training have not resulted in sufficient education regarding the rules governing human subjects research, and that this lack of adequate training has been responsible for noncompliance with those rules at many institutions.

“Over the past several years,” the notice states, “OHRP has identified serious, systemic noncompliance with the requirements of HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects at a significant number of major institutions engaged in human subjects research conducted or supported by HHS. In OHRP's experience, inadequate training and education of individuals involved in the conduct or review of human subjects research has been a major root cause of such noncompliance.”

The notice does not identify the institutions where OHRP found significant noncompliance with the rules.

Since 2000, the National Institutes of Health has required only that “key personnel” – those responsible for the design and conduct of research studies involving human subjects – receive such training.

In its notice, OHRP asks for comment on whether the better remedy for noncompliance would be to issue additional guidance recommending training or to develop a regulation requiring the implementation of such training and education programs. The notice sets a deadline of September 29, 2008, for comments.

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