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March 11, 2010

Dr. Henry Brady, President
American Political Science Association
1527 New Hampshire Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Henry:

I write as an APSA member to request that APSA be vigilant and effective and guarantee a politically independent, honest, and unbiased scientific evaluation for new neuropsychology/hierarchical psychodrama/ brain mechanism research programs that are beginning a review process in Washington. They promise a breakthrough in democratic theory. They (and any initiative to recapitalize the social sciences) also are at risk of an aggressive counter-attack by highly paid Republican lobbyists.

As you know, the research promises to illuminate unrecognized, non-rational brain mechanisms that inhibit disadvantaged and lower status people from acting rationally in their self interest. (For example, the tens of millions of people who lack health insurance coverage in America also are unlikely to vote.) The effect of induced nonvoting (in primaries and in general elections) is to weaken democracy and, *de facto*, to slow government learning.

Thus, major scientific breakthroughs and applied insights can upgrade the American democratic system and give new advantages to Democrats and progressive politics.

The Historical Record

A concern about Republican counter-attacks is justified by the historical record. Newer members of the Council may not be aware of the unwritten Stockman Rule ("Not unless invited to do so") that Republicans have used to limit government-funded behavioral research and their threat to zero-out all government-funded behavioral research. Institutions (like NSF and the National Academy of Sciences) that are supposed to be politically independent have become - behind closed doors and without putting anything into writing - exquisitely sensitive to political moods in Washington, to what Congress will approve, and to potential controversy and possible media attacks by angry Republican zealots. The scientific advisory panels and committees of NSF and the National Academy of Sciences stopped recommending rapid learning and new research in the Donald Campbell (evidence-based policy)/Lasswell traditions more than two decades ago and they have not restarted.

A Request: Scientific Integrity, Political Courage, a Focus on Scientific Opportunity

What I am seeking, from APSA, is simply support for political courage, scientific integrity, and honest evaluations based on scientific potential. All agenda-creating committees and institutions in science should honor their duties to give honest, straight-shooting, *scientific* advice. The Stockman Rule and potential attacks from anti-science partisans should be ignored.

I suggest two further steps:

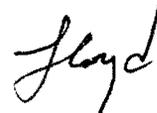
Two Further Steps

1.) Supporters of recapitalization should contact the major institutions that are most likely to act with political courage, scientific integrity, and honest recognition of scientific potential. These include PCAST (with copies of letters to Dr. Richard Levin at Yale, the social science member); AAU (with support from Presidents of its member institutions); and the IOM Council (from institutions where the neurosciences and behavioral sciences already have been building research facilities and programs.)

2.) The National Science Foundation system should be greatly strengthened by: a.) a new NSF Director and a top-level team with political courage and integrity that understands the potential contribution of the social sciences; b.) stronger and effective social science representation on the National Science Board, quickly; c.) strong and effective social science representation in the process of developing the new NSF five-year plan, especially new infrastructure projects and new investments for data systems in the mid-range (\$10 million - \$100 million across ten years - e.g., neurosciences, content analysis, and other recommendations.)

Thank you. I hope that this works -

Yours truly,



(Dr.) Lloyd S. Etheredge, Director
Government Learning Project

Cc: APSA Council