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

Dear President Brady:

Thank you for your leadership in opposition to Senator Tom Coburn's Amendment 2631 and your letter to all Senators (October 19, 2009) defending NSF's political science program.

Senator Coburn's amendment could be a "Know Nothing" attack. But as a political scientist who has followed Republican opposition to social science since the early Reagan years, may I suggest another possibility? There always has been a core Republican perception that government-funded social science underwrites liberals who were unwilling to take seriously, and to test fairly, key Republican ideas.

Bias, Disdain, and Contempt for Republican Ideas?

It is easy to see how Republicans can have this perception. For example key Republican ideas expressed by Ronald Reagan and his supporters, about the growing hierarchical psychology of a citizen-government relationship and its unhealthy national (including economic) effects, have never been tested by the University of Michigan researchers (e.g., the attached article, "President Reagan's Counseling" (1984) and background material on the www.policyscience.net Website).¹ APSA has known at its highest levels, for a long time, that the Michigan election researchers can appear to have an irrational hatred and prejudice against including measures that might validate Republican ideas. APSA's own ethics committee ruled (as I re-

call, when John DiIulio was Chair) that there was no obligation of American politics textbooks to mention, as a legitimate and testable scientific theory, these ideas that the President and majorities of both Houses of Congress were using to create the Reagan Revolution and a possible (if the theory was right) return to a healthier and more individualist national modal personality. And in the related Luce Commission case – which began the erosion of macroeconomic forecasting - our Ethics Committee also recognized that initiatives to test Republican ideas about a citizen-government psychodrama were being quietly derailed by Converse et al. in the National Academy of Sciences.

Suggestion: A High-Level Meeting

I urge you and a high-level delegation to meet with Senator Tom Coburn to understand his concerns. If you and your delegation can promise an end to stonewalling, an inclusion of missing variables, and a rapid, honest, and fair hearing and evaluation for Republican ideas as part of the election survey that Senator Coburn wants eliminated (a project similar to the Michelson-Morley experiment in physics) the result could be a happier and more Enlightened future for everyone.

Neuroscience and the Merits of Hierarchical Psychology Models

It has become increasingly clear, since the Milgram experiments discovered the unexpected power of hierarchical relations in the behavior of 2/3 of adults, that measures of hierarchical psychodramas could be widely revealing. For example, in a paper on "Grand Challenges: Mapping the Brain-Mind Connection of Politics and Emotion," (2006, pp. 10-13) for a NSF planning project (on www.policyscience.net), I suggested a new way to map the causes of persistent social problems, and problems of political and economic participation, in lower status human populations via the brain mechanisms of induced status adaptations in primates. Senator Tom Coburn, as an M.D., may recognize the issues in neuropsychology and that new, non-partisan solutions may become possible. Michigan may be able to create, as part of a survival package, an exciting breakthrough.

As you may know, several leading Americanists have been quietly favorable to a more even-handed/honest-broker scientific field. Ray Wolfinger told me: "We really don't know if there is anything up there" - i.e., the Michigan [also, Verba] attitude measures have never tested for the possibility of vivid hierarchical psychodramas. Aaron Wildavsky suggested the early comparative studies of Hong Kong, the US and Sweden that were part of the package derailed by Converse and Verba et al. in the famous non-meeting, during a Washington snowstorm in the early 1990s, disclosed in the Luce Commission/Department of Justice filings.

The Michigan Model as an Albatross

The Michigan model /survey has scientific and political limitations, both in fact and in appearance. And also Kuhnian problems. If the facts emerge on the Senate floor, as part of the debate on the Coburn amendment, Democrats and liberals also could develop concerns about what they are hearing and a history of rationalized partisanship and stonewalling that has been withheld from them.

The limitations at Michigan could become an albatross that sinks the rest of us. However if you and a high level delegation acknowledge these limitations and negotiate a statesmanlike solution with Senator Coburn, everyone could win.

Yours truly,



Dr. Lloyd S. Etheredge, Director
Government Learning Project
Fellow, World Academy of Art & Science

Cc: APSA Council; John Mark Hansen (Chair) and NES Board

¹The article appeared in Political Psychology in 1984, 5:4, pp. 737-740. A follow-up article, published a decade later, discussed the absence of an honest broker approach to Republican ideas: "Commentary: The Scientific Scandal of the 1980s," in Political Psychology, 15:3, 1994, pp. 531-539. (My understanding of the causal pathways has changed somewhat over the last fifteen years.] The idea of a backward (two-way) linkage from the public realm to individual personality was part of Lasswell's formulation. It is scarcely a Republican idea. A later draft proposal invited by the National Academy of Sciences/National Research Council included honest broker tests of key Democratic ideas about such psychodramas and linkages – e.g., the positive role-model and motivational effects that an activist leader like President Kennedy could have for economic performance and the culture.