NSF Funding for Political Science Research

On behalf of the over 8000 members of the Latin American Studies Association, the largest interdisciplinary US-based association of scholars studying Latin America, we wish to add our voices to those of other professional associations that are objecting to the Coburn Amendment passed by the United States Senate. This Amendment is designed to prevent the National Science Foundation (NSF) from supporting all research in Political Science that is not directly relevant to national security or the economic interests of the United States.

It is an ominous precedent if politicians decide which kinds of topics in social science are worthy of support. This particular decision suggests that they do not want scholars to examine how political campaigns work, who influences political decisions, who benefits from public policy, and many more questions that go to the heart of a functioning democracy. And it raises the question of what kinds of research topics will be next in being declared unworthy of support.

The NSF has a very rigorous system of peer review, the internationally accepted standard for judging the value of scientific research. It has served this country and its scholarly community well for decades. Curtailing its scientific autonomy endangers the status of the United States among the world’s leading nations in social science research.

Signed,

Evelyne Huber
University of North Carolina
President, LASA

Merilee Grindle
Harvard University
Vice President/ President-Elect, LASA