

## OPENING STATEMENT

**The Honorable Mo Brooks (R-AL), Chairman**  
Subcommittee on Research and Science Education  
*Social, Behavioral, and Economic Science Research: Oversight of the Need for Federal Investments and Priorities for Funding*

June 2, 2011

Good morning, and welcome to all of our witnesses. Today's hearing presents us with an opportunity to better understand the research being conducted in the social, behavioral, and economic sciences and to take a closer look at the Federal funding of such research.

The social, behavioral, and economic sciences are those that focus on human behavior and interaction. Often termed the "soft" sciences to distinguish them from the physical and life sciences, these sciences run the gamut from geography and sociology to linguistics and political science. In fact, we have four different disciplines represented at the witness table today: history, psychology, anthropology, and economics.

The Federal government invests in social, behavioral, and economic sciences through several agencies in order to better understand issues such as how children learn, how soldiers think and how humans react to disease.

The National Science Foundation, whose oversight falls within the jurisdiction of this Subcommittee, is the largest Federal supporter of the social, behavioral, and economic science research, funding close to 60 percent of basic research for these sciences at academic institutions. It is my understanding that in several disciplines it is either the predominant or exclusive source of federal basic research support.

The goal of this hearing is not to question whether the social, behavioral, and economic sciences produce interesting and sound research, as I believe we all can agree that they do. [*I come from a social science background. I have a degree in Political Science and Economics.*] Rather, the goal of our hearing is to look at the need for **federal investments** in these disciplines, how we determine what those needs are in the context of national priorities, and how we prioritize funding for those needs, not only within the social science disciplines, but also within all science disciplines, particularly when federal research dollars are scarce.

As with all of the hearings I have chaired or co-chaired this Congress, I am particularly interested in understanding the NSF investment in these sciences, including the amounts asked for in the FY12 budget request and how those priorities were made. In an effort to be responsive to the American taxpayer, Congress needs to ensure that all federal funding decisions are wise and produce significant value for the Nation.

I look forward to a healthy discussion with all of our esteemed witnesses today, and I thank you for joining us.