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Senate Introduces the Museum and Library Services Act of 2016

This month, The Museum of Library Services Act of 2016, sponsored by Senator Jack Reed (D-RI), was introduced in the Senate. The legislation, if passed, would reauthorize funding for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) for six years. Last reauthorized in 2010, this version would expand research and data collection capacity and encourage increased collaboration at the state and local level.

In a recent press release, Sen. Reed acknowledged the role of museums and libraries in providing educational and cultural services and the benefit a "relatively small federal investment" could have for society. So far, the bill has received bi-partisan support, co-sponsored by Senators Thad Cochran (R-MS), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Gary Peters (D-MI), Susan Collins (R-ME), and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY). Funding increases for research and data collection would be advantageous for the entomological sciences, and the status of the reauthorization bill will be monitored moving forward.

Sources and Additional Information:

Hawaiian Bees Declared Endangered

This month, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) added the seven types of yellow-faced, or masked, bees to the endangered species list, making them the first bee species to be given endangered status. Once found in abundance across the Hawaiian Islands, masked bee populations have fallen drastically in recent years due to a range of anthropogenic and environmental factors including invasive species, habitat loss, and wildfire.

Pollinator health has gained increased attention at the federal level for its critical role in the agricultural economy. Similar concerns were raised last month by USFWS regarding the rusty patched bumble bee, which has seen significant population decline throughout the Midwest and Northeastern United States over the last two decades. A variety of measures may be taken to protect the declining bee populations, but only a few have been implemented thus far. Pollinator health will be a persistent issue for policymakers and environmental agencies moving forward, even into the new Administration.

Sources and Additional Information:


FFAR Announces Rapid Outcomes from Agricultural Research (ROAR) Program

On September 26, the Foundation for Food and Agricultural Research (FFAR) announced the opening of the Rapid Outcomes from Agricultural Research (ROAR) program, a new initiative focused on mitigating the spread of harmful pests and pathogens in agriculture. In response to the devastating outbreak of avian flu last year, ROAR is intended to increase emergency response capacity and strengthen engagement and collaboration with the agricultural community.

This new program highlights the need to address situations that require rapid response. Emergency grant proposals submitted under ROAR will be reviewed within a week of the submission date, with an expedited research and resource provision process for those that are approved. The criteria used to judge submissions will include, but is not limited to the following:

- "The outbreak has regional and/or national implications;
- The outbreak is acute in nature and has substantial economic implications for a commodity; and
- The program will contribute to practical solutions that producers can implement in the field."

This program is structured around industry coalitions. Commodity groups will enter into an agreement with FFAR prior to any proposal submission that will qualify them for the expedited review process and will be required to match FFAR funding up to $150,000 should their emergency request be accepted. The intention is that this preexisting agreement will streamline
the application process and increase the speed and efficiency with which FFAR can provide the necessary resources.

Given the focus of this program, only agricultural commodity groups that have entered into the specified agreement with FFAR will be eligible. Further details on emergency criteria is available in the full solicitation. FFAR has not yet released specific deadline information.

Sources and Additional Information:


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**DARPA Announces Proposers Day for New Insect Allies Program**

On October 19, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) Biological Technologies Office (BTO) announced a Proposers Day for the new Insect Allies program. A formal Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) seeking proposals will be released at a later date. The Insect Allies program will seek to "provide an alternative to traditional agricultural threat response, using targeted gene therapy to protect mature plants within a single growing season." Insect Allies is a unique effort by DARPA to address emerging threats in the agricultural environment, such as agricultural bioterrorism domestically and abroad, as well as food security and production through synthetic biology. New programs, like Insect Allies, represent a recognition by the Department of Defense (DOD) that innovative technologies are needed to combat non-traditional defense challenges.

By exploiting the natural system of insect vectors and the plant viruses they transmit, Insect Allies seeks to increase the resilience of crop plants through the development of "vector-mediated mature plant modification technologies." Funded projects will progress through three phases, or Technical Areas, of 12, 18, and 18 months respectively, requiring a demonstration at the end of each stage. The requirements for each phase are as follows:

- "Technical Area 1 will develop a plant virus that delivers a transgene to a target plant species; Technical Area 2 will produce insect vectors for the modified virus to be transmitted to mature plants; and Technical Area 3 is the successful introduction of functional traits to mature plants."

Teaming is not required under this program, but it is strongly encouraged to ensure that applicants possess the resources and expertise to meet the demands of the project.

In anticipation of the BAA for the Insect Allies program, the Proposers Day on November 18 will include a Q&A session with Program Manager Dr. Blake Bextine, as well as "lightning
talks" and poster sessions for potential proposers. Specific objectives include introducing the Insect Allies program vision and goals to the community, facilitating interaction between investigators, and promoting teaming to effectively meet the research objectives of the program.

The Proposers Day event is limited to the first 100 attendees and the registration deadline is **November 14, 2016 at 12:00 pm**, or when capacity is reached. For those unable to attend in person, a webcast of the event will be available with a limit of 500 participants. **Note that the registration deadline still applies.** Following the event, additional information and presentation materials will be made available at [http://www.darpa.mil/work-with-us/opportunities](http://www.darpa.mil/work-with-us/opportunities). Questions may be submitted prior to the event at DARPA-SN-16-73@darpa.mil.

**Sources and Additional Information:**

- A synopsis of the Proposers' Day event is available at [https://www.fbo.gov/index?s=opportunity&mode=form&id=6267a3f5540445d97ebee420a6db7887&tab=core&_cview=0](https://www.fbo.gov/index?s=opportunity&mode=form&id=6267a3f5540445d97ebee420a6db7887&tab=core&_cview=0).
- The Special Notice announcing the event with a synopsis of the Insect Allies program is available at [https://www.fbo.gov/utils/view?id=5940328235fcd1671c033a37e7e1f6be](https://www.fbo.gov/utils/view?id=5940328235fcd1671c033a37e7e1f6be).