



WRITTEN COMMENTS

Hearing

**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES,
EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES**

March 29, 2012

Submitted by

American Industrial Hygiene Association

Falls Church, Virginia

Chairman Rehberg and Members of the Committee:

The American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) is pleased to submit the following comments to the House Committee on Appropriations – Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies on today’s hearing discussing the Fiscal Year 2013 Federal Budget.

Founded in 1939, AIHA is the premier association serving the needs of professionals involved in occupational and environmental health and safety practicing industrial hygiene in industry, government, labor, academic institutions, and independent organizations. The AIHA mission is to promote healthy and safe working environments by advancing the science, principles, practice, and value of industrial hygiene. A healthy workforce is essential to the success of American industry, our economic recovery, and our future position in the global economy.

As this Subcommittee continues its deliberations on the Fiscal Year 2013 Federal Budget, AIHA strongly urges you to, at the very least; provide the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) with funding in Fiscal Year 2013 comparable to that which was appropriated in Fiscal Year 2012. The President has proposed a Fiscal Year 2013 budget that eliminates all federal funding (\$24 million) for the NIOSH Educational and Research Centers (ERCs), and \$20 million for the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (AFF) sector.

NIOSH is the sole Federal agency responsible for conducting research, making recommendations for the prevention of work-related disease and injury, and leading the effort to assure that there are occupational safety and health professionals trained to protect America’s workers.

Consider:

ERCs – Through the 17 university-based ERCs across the U.S., NIOSH supports 87 interdisciplinary graduate degree programs and research training in the occupational health and safety core areas of industrial hygiene, occupational health nursing, occupational medicine, and occupational safety. The ERCs have a unique mission – to address occupational safety and health professional practice and research training in an inter-disciplinary environment. Graduates also have access to a vigorous continuing education program, assuring the latest information to improve worker health and safety. The importance of this program cannot be overstated – over 75% of the U.S. occupational safety and health professionals are trained through these centers, and over 5,000 small, medium and large-businesses are annually provided aid and consultation; yet there is still a shortage of qualified professionals to protect workers in the coming years.

AFF – Agricultural safety and health has been an important focus of NIOSH for more than 20 years. In 1990 Congress tasked NIOSH to lead the effort to prevent injuries and disease in this high-rate occupation. Today, NIOSH funds 7 regional centers for agriculture disease and injury research, education and prevention. The fatality rate in agriculture is 8 times that of the all-industry average. More than 1 in 10 AFF workers experience nonfatal injuries each year, and this reported figure does not even include men, women, and youths on farms with fewer than 11 full-time employees. With elimination of AFF funding one can only imagine what the increase in occupational injuries and illnesses might be.

Elimination of funding for the ERCs and the AFF program would have negative impact on worker occupational safety and health for years to come as fewer and fewer individuals would have access to this specialized training. If we are to continue protecting workers in the future we must ensure that younger professionals take the place of the Baby Boomers who will soon be retiring.

AIHA and our members are fully aware of the economic situation in the United States and the difficult decisions you and others must make in enacting a Fiscal Year 2013 budget. However, we must not allow this economic concern to keep us from protecting the health and safety of workers throughout this economy. NIOSH plays an important role in this effort and continued support by Congress is required.

AIHA urges you to include at least the Fiscal Year 2012 level of funding in the Fiscal Year 2013 Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations bill for the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments on today's hearing. Please do not hesitate to contact AIHA with any questions you may have. AIHA stands ready to assist you and other members of Congress in any possible way.

For further information, please contact:
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