

## ASSOCIATION NEWS

### THE NSF LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCES PROGRAM

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*National Science Foundation\**

The National Science Foundation provides support for basic social science research on law and legal institutions through the Law and Social Sciences Program. The primary emphasis of the program is on research that will enhance understanding of the nature and sources of variation in legal rules and institutions and their consequences. Proposals directed to developing methodologies for the social scientific study of law are also considered. Proposals concerning criminal aspects of the law will be considered if they relate primarily to theoretical questions in the social scientific study of the law. However, the central focus of the Law and Social Sciences Program is on noncriminal aspects of the legal system.

Those who anticipate submitting proposals might keep in mind the broad concerns that are central to the program:

1. The capacity of law, through statutes, administrative regulations, and court decisions, to affect individual and organizational behavior, its limitations in regulating action, conditions which enhance or diminish the impact of law, and the processes by which that impact is achieved or diminished.
2. The use of alternative methods, both formal (legal) and informal (extra-legal), for dealing with disputes, and factors that contribute to the selection of the alternatives used.
3. Change in the legal system, its causes and the processes by which it occurs, with particular emphasis on factors affecting the use of law as an instrument of social control.

The program's primary interest is in basic processes and in the development of theory to assist in explaining them. The following topics illustrate recent grants made by the program:

- . the role of the trial court in the community;
- . the functioning of the jury;
- . zoning litigation;
- . the effectiveness of federal mortgage statutes;
- . the effects of warranty law on corporations;
- . basic negotiation and arbitration processes; and
- . aspects of legal careers.

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Studies of the role of social science in litigation have been funded also.

Proposals to support dissertation research on topics within the scope of the program are encouraged. Like other dissertation research support within the Foundation, such proposals are to be submitted by the student's dissertation adviser.

Those whose interest in the social scientific study of law is predominantly in applied rather than basic research should submit proposals to the National Science Foundation's Division of Applied Research. Arthur Konopka in that Division can provide more detailed information. Proposals for applied research must contain a section on "Utilization Strategy." A proposal submitted to either the Law and Social Sciences Program or the Division of Applied Research may also be reviewed by the other program, at the discretion of the relevant program directors.

Because Congress has assigned primary responsibility for research on the criminal justice system to the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice (NILECJ), proposals pertaining primarily to criminal law topics should normally be submitted to NILECJ or be jointly submitted to NILECJ and the NSF's Law and Social Sciences Program. Researchers contemplating a proposal related to the criminal law should contact the Law and Social Sciences Program to discuss the issue of simultaneous or sole submission to NILECJ.

Because of the responsibilities of the Center for Studies in Crime and Delinquency of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) with respect to legal issues in the fields of juvenile justice and mental health, similar inquiries should be made with respect to topics in that area. It should also be noted that the National Institute of Education supports research in the field of law and education.

The Law and Social Sciences Program does *not* fund research on legal education, nor does it fund studies based in philosophy and other humanistic traditions. The latter are within the jurisdiction of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

It is ordinarily wise to submit a preproposal to the program for comment before one completes a formal proposal, although such preproposals are not required. An extended letter or a memorandum of five-to-ten pages would be an appropriate beginning. Through such a submission, problems and defects in otherwise promising proposals can be identified and communicated to the researcher. Preproposals also allow early resolution of the jurisdictional matters noted above.

Applicants for funding should note that the Law and Social Sciences Program is interdisciplinary. That does not mean that co-principal investigators from more than one discipline are required; however, collaboration between social scientists and specialists in the law is encouraged. It is particularly important that proposals be based on, and related to, the interdisciplinary literature in law and the social sciences. Individuals working within one discipline should be aware of the need to look beyond the boundaries of their own discipline in examining the literature relevant to the subject on which they propose to conduct research.

Proposals are reviewed by reviewers selected *ad hoc* to provide relevant expertise on each proposal and by a continuing panel for the program. This group meets twice a year, in October and in April. To be considered in the October meeting, proposals should be submitted no later than August 15; for consideration in the April meeting, submission should be received by mid-December.

Those intending to submit proposals should be aware that new NSF guidelines provide that, for any formal proposal submitted to NSF, the portion of the proposal devoted to project description is normally not to exceed fifteen (15) single-spaced pages.

*Social Science History* is interested in receiving information on prospective book reviewers. Anyone who wishes to have his or her name included on the reviewer list should send to Alan M. Kraut, Book Review Editor (address below) the following information on a 5" X 8" card: name, address, university and date of degree, title of dissertation, three areas of specialty, publications, and, if employed, employer.

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