



Sounds of eRA Podcast Transcription

Part eight of a twelve part series where Edward Johnson Jr. (a.k.a. Eddie) sits down with Sandra Nordahl, President, Society of Research Administrators International (SRA), to discuss the mission of SRA and the effects of sequestration on research administration.

Contents

SOUNDS OF ERA PODCAST TRANSCRIPTION 1

LOSING IN THE TRENCHES..... 3

Losing In The Trenches

Eddie: Welcome to another “*Sounds of the eRA.*” My name is Edward Johnson, a.k.a. Eddie, and I'm the President of InfoEd International. We're going to be speaking today with Sandra Nordahl. She's the President of SRA. We're going to be speaking about SRA's mission and inner workings and also the effects of sequestration on research administration and its effects on the world around us. Hello, Sandra.

Sandra: Hi, Eddie. Thank you for asking me to participate in your podcast.

Eddie: Glad you were able to accommodate this. Talking to you earlier, and you were describing the first-hand effects, which I think affected me because we can throw numbers around. And we can throw hundreds and billions and trillions around and I don't think many people can comprehend that number. But as soon as you talked about the effects on the airport, the effects people in your office, boy that brought it home for me.

Because now it's tangible and my father in law used to say that and he was involved with a town that he was on the board. He said that, the town would argue and care about small things like stop signs because they could relate to that. But when you talk about expenses things, they didn't care. Like they would buy a pool, but they wouldn't invest in new stop signs. Because they understood the money – what a stop sign felt like but they had no concept of how much money a pool – and they didn't mind spending it.

So I think what you were suggesting is kinds of converse to that, that people throw these numbers around and what is \$1 trillion? How many people really know how that feels like? However, people can vary easily relate to the things you described in my mind and I think what you're suggesting is having individuals that can go lobby because those are going to be the heartfelt.

Those are going to be the things that really see the effects and those are going to bust through all those layers of administration and get right down to the trenches, if you will, of the real world effects of this sequestration of other people on the street.

Sandra: I would agree. I think that when you think about what sequestration can do negatively to our economy. There needs to be some thoughtful – and I can appreciate Congress and the administration's concerns about the budget spiraling out of control, what have you, access spending, cuts, whatever and do whatever political sense you subscribe to. I appreciate all those different viewpoints, but there needs to come a time when we work together as a country and the people that we've put in those offices. We've elected them to do a job and I think that's the important part.

Where expected to do jobs, to foster the economy of the United States and we expect them to do their jobs as well. So I think let's put the bickering aside and get on with the business of the country, which I think is the most important thing. It's going to be critical that we come together as a nation and do what we need to do to keep or economic machine rolling along and make sure that we don't fall behind in our technological innovation and in bringing these important projects

to the marketplace.

I think about the cuts that are happening to different areas so the military. I have relatives that fly on military aircraft's do I want them flying in outdated, potentially dangerous equipment? No. And that just doesn't make sense to me. Putting our troops in harm's way is something that we acknowledge and has to be done periodically and I'm not a subscriber to a lot of that stuff but I understand that. But making concerted cuts that puts them needlessly at danger is not to me logical.

Cutting the NIH budget reduces the chances that advances being made in curing and treating horrible diseases such as Parkinson's and other neurological diseases are just really sad to me because we're on the verge of learning about how most of the brain functions and making huge progress in many different areas. Cutting the CDC funding would make our nation less able to manage catastrophic outbreaks of disease that could result in many, many people dying.

Cutting borders, airports and the FBI affects or national security. Is that a good idea? I hardly think so. And I think the public outcry has at least I know this has happened in San Diego, we were slated to have our regional Airport in Ramona shoot done by the FAA that was on their list and that is the airport for Southern California, where the fire bombers deploy from. And or wildfire season started in April this year, which is – we usually don't get into wildfire season until at least June, July, and that really got some notice back at the FAA and fortunately for us, our regional Airport has been able to remain open.

And this has really been beneficial, we've had several wildfires already in Southern California and they have made national news. And perhaps international news and we've been able to avert the catastrophic result that we had in 2003 and 2007 because that airport has remained opened. And of course, the coordination has gotten much better since 2003 and 2007 disasters, but had that airport being shut down like the FAA wanted to do, we would have been in big, big trouble.

Eddie: Not to sound cynical, you can almost imagine people having a meeting, saying, "Okay, we're going to save money by shutting this down." But if there's a fire, how much money is going to cost us to come in and clean up the mess of that.

Sandra: Yeah. There have been some big fires in north of Los Angeles, even down here, we've already had two major fires this year and if you don't have those fire bombers. I can't stress how critical they are because they can drop water, drop fire retardant and get these fires under control quickly, but if you don't have those resources you're in big trouble. And I can't think of a positive outcome in reducing national security funding.

Cutting head start in the special education programs hurts our nation's children and as a mother of a child that greatly benefited from Special Ed, this is painful to me personally. I know of colleagues in the research administration field whose children would be adversely impacted if these programs were cut. These programs are the very elements that often help a child succeed as an adult and my child did succeed because of quality education, he received because of special education funding.

I think many agencies will have to re-examine how work is being accomplished and use their reduction of work force to review their processes and procedures. And then in the end, this may create efficiency and stream lining that will be beneficial and that maybe the one thing that is the positive outcome to sequestration.

Eddie:

Sandra, this is been absolutely fantastic stuff. I am very excited about the information we've been able to collect from you here. I want to point out that on the SRA website, on the homepage there's an entry point to the sequestration resource center that SRA, has been able to put together. It is a fantastic place to go look and see some real world examples of the things that are going on in sequestration, but I encourage you to go take a look as well.

Because this information is ever evolving and SRA does a great job of keeping that updated. I would encourage you to bookmark that site and look at it periodically to see what's new in that area.

Well, again, Sandra, I really appreciate your time. Fantastic information and I hope you will be willing to do this again, if there are other things that we should chat about.

Sandra:

Great, thank you so much for having me.