



COPAFS

Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics

ANALYSIS OF THE ADMINISTRATION’S FY 2020 BUDGET REQUEST

This month, the administration released the proposed budget for FY 2020. Overall, the president’s request represents deep spending cuts to non-defense discretionary spending, which covers all of the federal statistical agencies, continuing the on-going squeeze on agencies’ operating budgets. While the likelihood that these numbers will make it to the final FY 2020 appropriations is small, the President’s Budget Request outlines the Administration’s priorities. So while appropriators may largely ignore the proposed spending amounts, they may take cues from the policies contained within the budget proposal.

The table below contains the recent budget history of the statistical agencies. While the numbers for the principal statistical agencies may seem bleak, the administration has including some promising points for data users in their budget, including supporting the Federal Data Strategy by establishing a US Federal Data Service within the Department of Commerce’s Office of the Undersecretary for Economic Affairs, and beginning to implement the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act (FEPA) of 2018, including designating agency Statistical Officials and Chief Data Officers.¹ In total, the budget provides a total of \$7 million in funding to support implementation initiatives.

Agency	2018 Omnibus Bill	FY 2019 Enacted	FY 20 Request	Change from FY 19	Congress		
					House	Senate	Final
Bureau of Economic Analysis	\$ 99.0	\$ 101.00	\$ 107.99	\$ 6.99	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Bureau of Justice Statistics	\$ 98.5	\$ 84.38	\$ 95.82	\$ 11.44	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Bureau of Labor Statistics	\$ 612.0	\$ 615.00	\$ 655.00	\$ 40.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Bureau of Transportation Statistics	\$ 26.0	\$ 26.00	\$ 26.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Census Bureau	\$ 2,814.0	\$ 3,821.39	\$ 6,165.85	\$ 2,344.46	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Current Surveys and Programs	\$ 270.0	\$ 270.00	\$ 284.01	\$ 14.01	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Periodic Censuses and Programs	\$ 2,544.0	\$ 3,551.39	\$ 5,881.84	\$ 2,330.45	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Economic Research Service	\$ 86.8	\$ 86.76	\$ 61.00	\$ (25.76)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Energy Information Administration	\$ 125.0	\$ 125.00	\$ 118.00	\$ (7.00)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
National Agricultural Statistics Service	\$ 191.7	\$ 175.52	\$ 163.00	\$ (12.52)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
National Center for Education Statistics	\$ 258.5	\$ 268.20	\$ 268.20	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Statistics	\$ 109.5	\$ 109.50	\$ 109.50	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Assessment	\$ 149.0	\$ -	\$ 151.00	\$ 151.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Assessment Governing Board	\$ 7.7	\$ -	\$ 7.70	\$ 7.70	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
National Center for Health Statistics	\$ 160.4	\$ 160.40	\$ 155.00	\$ (5.40)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics	\$ 57.0	\$ 53.00	\$ 48.80	\$ (4.20)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics, SSA	\$ 32.0	\$ -	\$ 32.00	\$ 32.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Statistics of Income, IRS	\$ 33.7	\$ -	\$ 34.70	\$ 34.70	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -

The President’s Budget also urges Congress to consider the administration’s proposal to consolidate the Census Bureau, the Bureau of Economic Analysis, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics within the Department of Commerce in order to improve the delivery of America’s Economic Statistics by “making agency operations more efficient,

¹ “Budget for a Better America” FY 2020 Budget of the US Government. P. 8

improving products, and reducing the burden on respondents, while preserving the Agencies' brand recognition and independence."²

And disappointingly, the Administration has included provision in its request to move forward with the plans to relocate and realign the Economic Research Service, despite report language included in the FY 2019 Appropriations bill.

Overall, Congress will likely give only passing consideration to the top line numbers in the President's budget, and proceed according to their own numbers.

AGENCIES IN-DEPTH

Bureau of Economic Analysis

The administration requested an additional \$7 million in FY 2020, making BEA one of the few agencies to receive an increase in the request. The funding is requested to produce new measures such as GDP for Puerto Rico and to participate in the development of a framework for a Federal Data Service, as discussed in the President's Management Agenda. The goal is to improve external stakeholder data access and use, exploit new and nontraditional data sources and foster the development of new data products.

BEA will also contribute \$2 million towards implementation initiatives associated with the Foundations for Evidence-based Policymaking Act.

Bureau of Labor Statistics

The Bureau of Labor Statistics operating budget request remains flat, as the administration requested \$655 million in FY 2020, with the additional \$40 million being dedicated to relocating the agency to the Suitland Federal Center, to join with Census and BEA when the latter agency's lease expires in 2022. All major program areas remain flat-funded.

The administration's request also indicated that BLS should continue to work towards consolidation and reorganization of the agency into the Department of Commerce with Census and BEA. Stakeholder communities remain supportive, though continuing to wait for more details on how the agency plans to maintain BLS' mission, integrity, and independence as specified in the budget request.

Bureau of Justice Statistics

The FY 2020 request of \$95.82 million includes a \$5 million increase in direct appropriations which total \$48 million. The additional money includes funds transferred to BJS for research and statistical services, management and administrative costs and assessments for rescissions.

The additional \$5 million in appropriated funds is directed to help expand the use of administrative records for statistical and research purposes and support major programs including the National Crime Victimization Survey, continued partnership with the FBI on the National Crime Statistics Exchange, and other record linkage projects.

² Ibid, p. 66

Bureau of Transportation Statistics

The Bureau of Transportation Statistics annual appropriation is authorized through the Fixing American's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act). The FAST Act authorized \$26 million in annual spending for BTS through 2020, keeping the agency's funding flat with FY 2019.

Census Bureau

The FY 2020 Census Bureau Request includes an increase of \$2.3 billion over FY 2019, with \$5.3 billion of that going towards the decennial count. There is an additional \$1 billion in funds from previous year's appropriations, but this still falls well short of the Census Bureau's [Life-Cycle Cost Estimate](#).

Other priorities identified include:

- Supporting further transformation of Census Bureau data dissemination through the Center for Enterprise Data Services and Consumer Information
- Funding a research study conducted by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine to evaluate and improve current U.S. poverty measurement methods and indicators
- Supporting research and increased partnership with third party data providers to accelerate data

The Census Bureau will also contribute \$5 million to support FEPA implementation activities, along with the \$2 million from BEA.

Economic Research Service

This year's request continues to propose deep cuts to ERS' budget. The budget requests a total of \$60.5 million for ERS, \$15.5 million of which is dedicated to the administration's proposal to relocate the agency out of the Washington, DC area. That leaves \$45 million for ERS's primary activities, the same request the Administration made in FY 2019, which Congress ignored.

At this funding level, ERS would discontinue all of its research related to the rural economy and food safety and data products on USDA food and nutrition assistance programs and food access and consumer food choices. The Service would also need to eliminate the following topics from the Agricultural Markets and Trade, Farms, Conservation, and Agricultural R&D program:

- farm, conservation, and trade policy; investments in agricultural research and development
- international food security for low- and middle-income countries; and
- special topics such as policy effectiveness, drought resilience, new energy sources, local and regional food markets, beginning farmers and ranchers, invasive species, and markets for environmental services

Energy Information Administration

The EIA's budget request contains a 5% cut to the agency's overall budget. The funding was requested to continue core statistical and analysis activities which include the Weekly Natural Gas Storage Report, one the Principal Economic Indicators, as well the Short-Term and Annual Energy Outlooks.

National Agriculture Statistics Service

The President has requested \$163 million for NASS in FY 2020, a 6.6% decrease from FY 2019. This funding is split between \$118 million for Agricultural Estimates and \$45 for the Census of Agriculture.

Census of Agriculture

The budget for the Census of Agriculture is essentially flat from FY 2019, as operations from the 2017 Census of Agriculture wind down.

Agricultural Estimates

The entire \$11.5 million cut would be from the Agricultural Estimates program. The budget request also provides some funding to transition the Farm Labor Survey to NASS; it had previously been conducted through the Department of Labor.

National Center for Education Statistics

The President's Request asks for an additional \$3 million for statistics to support the Privacy Technical Assistance Center, which serves State and local education agencies, the post-secondary community and other parties who use education data systems on privacy and confidentiality of student records.

Additional priorities include continued development of digital based assessment for the National Assessment of Educational Progress, continuation of the School Survey on Crime and Safety and of the School Crime Supplement to that National Crime Victimization Survey.

National Center for Health Statistics

Located within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, NCHS requested \$155 million for FY 2020, a \$5 million cut from FY 2019. This cut represents a major threat to NCHS' data products. The reduction in funds would require NCHS to decrease sample sizes to the lowest size "which permits production on key health indicators at the national level". Given the increasing costs of surveys, this could mean NCHS may need to eliminate a key survey.

National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics

NCSES also received a cut, nearly 8%, while being tasked to maintaining its ongoing activities. The NCSES budget request identifies ways that the agency will seek to continue its effort to improve coverage, alternative data sources, and data quality through such efforts as incorporating a longitudinal design for the Survey of Doctorate Recipients and investigating non-traditional data sources for estimation purposes.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM CONGRESS

Before Congress can work on the Appropriations Bills, they must address the austerity caps put in place in 2011 by the Budget Control Act. This requires raising the caps like was done for fiscal years 2018 and 2019. This extra step in the process is likely to delay the progress on FY 2020 Appropriations bills, so we can expect to see continuing resolutions this year as well.

However, we do expect that Appropriators will begin their work under the assurances that budget caps will be raised. In fact, the process is already begun as appropriations committee hearings begin. We will continue to engage Congress to help understand how appropriations will impact our national data infrastructure, but do not expect the passage of any laws until well into the new fiscal year.

The American Statistical Association also tracks budget issues. Read their analysis [here](#).