

FRIENDS OF LABOR STATISTICS

An Informal Network of Organizations and Individuals Reliant on BLS Statistics

March 7, 2016

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
503 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health & Human Services,
Education, & Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services,
Education & Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Appropriations Leaders,

Countless businesses, communities, students, and government policy makers rely on the accuracy, objectivity, and timeliness of statistical information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Among the critically important products that BLS provides are the:

- Jobs outlook upon which job seekers, employers and matriculating students plan their participation in the labor market;
- Consumer Price Index by which we measure inflation and base monetary policy;
- Principal economic indicators of national, plus state and local, employment/unemployment ;
- Measures of productivity that gauge our nation's economic performance; and
- Monthly data on changes in the prices of imported and exported goods traded between the U.S. and the rest of the world.

The undersigned commend you for having restored *some* of the lost capacity of the Bureau of Labor Statistics by giving the agency an appropriation increase of \$17 million in FY 2016 over FY 2015. But, between FY 2009-FY 2105, the absolute value and/or the purchasing power of BLS appropriations went down *every year*. The agency eliminated several programs in FY 2013 and FY 2014 and in FY 2015 had to rely on a one-time transfer from the Department of Commerce to maintain BLS' Export Price Program. The agency also cut back, to unsustainable levels, its rate of replacement of staff and staff training and development in 2015.

The FY 2016 increase will go a long way toward bringing BLS back on its feet, but it is not enough for the agency to continue all of its current programs. The BLS has not at this date announced any specific program's elimination, but we await with trepidation the agency's decisions about what to keep and where to contract to fit its 2016 funding. Every one of BLS' current programs has a strong and vocal constituency.

With this in mind, we urge you to be thinking ahead about an increase in BLS appropriations for 2017. An appropriation of \$641 million in FY 2017, or an increase of \$32 million over FY 2016, would assure the continuation of all major BLS programs *and* allow more complete coverage by BLS of the “gig” economy and other alternative work arrangements, expansion of the BLS’ Consumer Expenditure Survey to support the Census Bureau in its development of a supplemental poverty measure, and the conduct of a survey of employer-provided training.

No other federal agency besides BLS collects and makes accessible to us the national labor market, workforce, and consumer price data upon which we or our members rely. Thanks for continuing to support BLS capacity to provide these critical data.

Sincerely,

American Psychological Association
American Sociological Association
American Statistical Association
APB Associates
Association of Population Centers
Association of Public Data Users
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Center for Human Resource Research at the Ohio State University
Council for Community and Economic Research
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics
Haver Analytics
National Apartment Association
National Association for Business Economics
National Association of Forensic Economists
National Multifamily Housing Council
Population Association of America
Prison Policy Initiative
Rural Sociological Society
Southeast Michigan Council of Governments
Workforce Data Quality Campaign

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