



## **Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics**

20 F Street, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20001

Office: 202.507.6254

[www.copafs.org](http://www.copafs.org)

*Advancing Excellence in Federal Statistics*

### **Selected 2017 Activities/Accomplishments**

COPAFS is pleased to report that 2017 was exciting that included many important accomplishments. COPAFS also was very active in representing our membership in advancing excellence in federal statistics. A summary of these accomplishments and activities are as follows:

#### **Action Plan and Mission Statement**

COPAFS has developed a new mission statement – Advancing Excellence in Federal Statistics – and an action plan to guide COPAFS in pursuing this goal. The action plan can be found at this [link](#).

#### **Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology Research and Policy Conference**

COPAFS is cosponsoring this important conference with the Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology. The 2018 conference has experienced all-time high in receiving submissions of excellent abstracts. The preliminary program may be found at this [link](#), and we are sure you will agree that we will have an outstanding collection of research and policy presentations.

#### **Quarterly Meetings**

Four Quarterly meetings were held to inform stakeholders on key issues. These meetings were well attended, generating some healthy interactions and discussions.

**March 3, 2017** – Topics included: GAO High Risk List (Robert Goldenkoff); Status of the Federal Statistical System (Nancy Potok); and COSSA’s “Why Social Science” Campaign (Wendy Naus).

**June 2, 2017** – Topics included: FY2017 And Anticipated FY2018 Funding on Statistical Programs (Panel of Statistical Agency Directors); and Political Interference with Objective Statistical Measurement in Greece (Andreas Georgiou, former Chief Statistician of Greece).

**September 15, 2017** – Topics included: Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking Report and Recommendations (Katharine Abraham and Ron Haskins); Boosting Public Confidence and Trust in Federal Statistics (Ron Wasserstein); and The Role of the Decennial Census in the Geographic Distribution of Federal Funds (Andrew Reamer).

**December 8, 2017** – Topics included: 2020 Decennial Census Status Update (Deb Stempowski); Update on the Federal Statistical System (Nancy Potok); Initiatives for a Fair and Accurate 2020 Decennial Census (Corrine Yu); Next Steps on the Promise of Evidence-Based Policymaking (Nick Hart); Advances in Data Visualization in the Federal Statistical System (Gerson Vasquez, Ryan Dolan, Mirvat Sewadeh, and Kevin Patrick).

## Friends of the Bureau of Labor Statistics

Dr. Erica Groshen, the former Commissioner of BLS, has taken over the responsibilities of the Chair of the Friends of BLS. John Thompson, COPAFS Executive Director, is the co-Chair. Early activities have included adding over 30 new members, and sending a letter in support of the nomination of Dr. William Beach for Commissioner of the BLS. Groshen and Thompson have also formed a steering committee to meet periodically and provide strategic guidance for the activities of the Friends of BLS. The first meeting of the steering committee with take place in early 2018. You can learn more about the current status of the Friends of BLS at this [link](#).

## Monthly Stakeholder Updates

This past year, COPAFS issued six Occasional Notes to our membership and friends. We are enhancing our communications by instituting two new series of monthly programs to provide our membership with timely updates on issues, events, and concerns associated with federal statistics. The first is a monthly in-person meeting with Nancy Potok, Chief Statistician of the United States. The second is a monthly email to members that provides a summary of significant events or issues related to federal statistics. The first two meetings were held with Nancy Potok in November and December and proved to be very informative. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday January 9, 2018. The first two membership updates were sent for October and November. You can find the monthly updates at this [link](#).

## New Members

COPAFS welcomes the following new affiliate members:

Georgetown University  
Nielsen  
ProximityOne  
PSB

## Activities

- Federal appropriations, legislation, and administration guidance – COPAFS monitored such actions that affect the statistical agencies that produce the valuable federal statistics that our membership relies on. COPAFS responded, often in partnership with key stakeholders, in many instances with educational activities to inform congressional or administration leadership and staff. For example:
  - COPAFS took a leadership role in addressing the potential consequences of H.R. 482 (sponsored by Representative Paul A. Gosar), the Local Zoning and Property Rights Protection Act which implied that “*no Federal funds may be used to design, build, maintain, utilize, or provide access to a Federal database of geospatial information on community racial disparities or disparities in access to affordable housing.*” This could have had far reaching effects on many important federal surveys. Our discussions with Representative Gosar’s office resulted in an agreement that this language was too broad. Our letter to Representative Gosar is discussed in more detail below.

- COPAFS sent materials to Secretaries Price, Ross and Acosta that described the importance of various statistical programs and Agencies under their purview. These materials may be found on our website at this [link](#).
  - COPAFS joined a number of stakeholders to meet with Molly Elizabeth Conway, Deputy Chief of Staff in the Office of the Secretary at the Department of Labor, to discuss the importance of the BLS.
  - COPAFS met directly with leadership at each Statistical Agency to get a firm understanding of their issues and how COPAFS could provide support.
  - COPAFS met with Karen Dunn Kelly, Undersecretary for Economic Affairs at the Department of Commerce to discuss the status of the 2020 Decennial Census.
  - COPAFS wrote or cosigned a number of letters in support of Statistical Agency appropriations. These letters may be found at this [link](#).
- Presentations – COPAFS was invited to make a number of presentations on federal statistics as well as updates on issues statistical agencies are confronting. These presentations also provided an opportunity for COPAFS to highlight activities underway to respond to these issues. These included:
    - American Planning Association Daniel Burnham Forum on Big Ideas: Keynote Address
    - American Evaluation Association, Discussion Forum: Building on the Recommendations of the Commission on Evidence Based Policymaking
    - Pew Research Center: lunch lecture on federal statistics and COPAFS activities
    - Black Caucus Foundation Annual Meeting: Panel on Redistricting and the 2020 Census
    - Association of Public Data Users Annual Conference: Panel on How Data is Used to Build Evidence for Policymaking
    - The Committee on National Statistics: update on status of the Federal Statistical System and COPAFS activities.
    - The American Statistical Association Board of Directors: update on status of the Federal Statistical System and COPAFS activities.
    - The Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, lecture Good Data for Good Government in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
    - American Sociological Association, Federal Statistics Working Group: update on status of the Federal Statistical System and COPAFS activities
    - Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the Harvard Kennedy School
      - Gerrymandering, Redistricting and American Democracy conference
      - Moving Redistricting Reform scholar-practitioner workshop
    - Committee on National Statistics: Expert Meeting for the Office of Management and Budget on Blended Data Policy and Standards
- Letters – COPAFS wrote or cosigned a number of letters in support of federal statistics, including:
    - Letter to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pension in Support of William Beach's Nomination as Commissioner of the BLS
    - Letter to House and Senate Leadership in support of the “Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act” (H.R. 4174 and S. 2046)
    - Letters to House and Senate Leadership on the FY 2018 Agriculture Appropriations bill
    - Letter to Secretary Acosta in Support of BLS

- Letter to Congressional Leadership in support of Commission on Evidence Based Policymaking Report
- Letter in support of the Bureau of Transportation Statistics
- Letter in support of Federal Agency Budgets
- A full list of the 2017 letters may be found at this [link](#)
- Congressional outreach – COPAFS met congressional staff and members as part of ongoing education on Federal Statistics. These included:
  - Senator Tom Carper: member and staff meeting to discuss COPAFS and offer insights on the 2020 Census.
  - The Congressional Tri-Caucus: co-Chairs and staff meeting to discuss critical issues facing the 2020 Census.
  - Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee: staff meeting to discuss critical issues facing the U.S. Census Bureau
  - House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform: staff meeting to discuss the recommendations of the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking
  - Senator Kamala Harris: staff meeting to discuss 2020 Census readiness and funding issues
  - Senator Patty Murray: staff meeting to discuss recommendations of the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking
  - Representative Paul Gosar: staff meeting to discuss importance of local area demographic data for good governance
  - Representative Barbara Comstock: staff meeting to discuss the importance of funding for U.S. Census programs, including the American Community Survey and the 2020 Census.
- Support for Federal Statistics – With support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, COPAFS is joining the American Statistical Association and the Population Association of America to develop materials and a program of support appropriations for the Census Bureau, BLS, NCES, and NCHS. We expect to launch our program early in 2018.
- COPAFS joined the Population Association of America to co-sponsor a congressional briefing – Making Kids Count in the Big Count: Census 2020.
- COPAFS joined the American Education Research Association to co-host a congressional briefing and recognition of the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the National Center for Education Statistics.
- American Association of Public Opinion Research Ad Hoc Committee on Cellular Spam Warning and Call Blocking Software – COPAFS is participating with a number of AAPOR members to prepare a report on the rapidly expanding use of spam warning and call blocking software, and its effect on telephone survey methodology. The report should be issued early in 2018.