



COUNCIL OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS ON FEDERAL STATISTICS

Federal Statistics in the First 100 Days of the Trump Administration

The new President will have several opportunities to sustain and improve the nation's federal statistical system within the first three months of his taking office:

Appointing or reappointing the heads of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and Bureau of the Census. Given the vital importance of the statistics generated by these agencies, it may be injudicious to let their Presidentially- appointed, Senate-confirmed heads' positions go vacant for months and months. BLS Commissioner Erica Groshen's term ends January 29, 2017. Census Bureau Director John Thompson is eligible for reappointment to a full 5-year term beginning January 2017.

- BLS produces the timely, objective and accurate weekly employment/unemployment and wage statistics on which private business and public macroeconomic decision making hinge. BLS also provides: trend data on employment and wages by occupations and regions, which guide educational decisions by individuals; occupational health and fatality information; the monthly consumer price index and producer prices that are vital input to the government's inflation projections; as well as data on measurement of U.S. productivity.
- The Census Bureau is gearing up under some budget pressure to conduct the 2020 Decennial Census. This benchmark is the basis for federal fund allocation and voting districts. It is updated by the periodic American Community Survey. The Bureau also produces the Economic Census, which provides comprehensive statistics on business establishments and activities, and the Census of Governments, which describes the scope and nature of the state and local government sectors and provides authoritative benchmark figures of public finance and public employment.

Issues to be considered in making appointments include the need for innovation in leading statistical agencies in an era of big data and evidence-based decision making and the requirement (as per Statistical Directive #1 under the Budget and Accounting Procedures Act of 1950 and the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995) that statistical agency heads be selected "based primarily on their scientific and technical knowledge, credentials, experience, and integrity."

Recognizing federal statistics as critical to the public's trust in government. Trust in the federal government will continue to be a major issue in 2017. Conveying the significant legal and technical safeguards that prevent federal statistics from being altered or politicized could calm a wary public. The laws protecting the privacy and confidentiality of those who respond to federal surveys also need to be underscored and reinforced as a mechanism for increasing trust.

Proposing adequate funding in fiscal year 2018 to assure that basic functions and Administration priorities for federal statistics can be accomplished. In general, the 13 official Federal statistical agencies** have experienced a drop in purchasing power. Lower levels of inflation-adjusted funds have resulted in: (1) the elimination of several survey programs; (2) reduction in the flexibility of statistical agencies to modernize information technology and adapt to new information demands; (3) reductions in staff hiring, training and development, sometimes to the brink of endangering statistical quality; and (4) an inability to invest in and thoroughly test the methodologies that would allow an agency to conduct surveys at lower cost. Through the budget proposal process, this Administration can direct the development of better data for decision making.

**Officially designated statistical agencies are the: Bureau of the Census; Bureau of Economic Analysis; Bureau of Labor Statistics; Bureau of Justice Statistics; Bureau of Transportation Statistics; Economic Research Service; Energy Information Administration; Natl. Agricultural Statistics Service; Natl. Center for Education Statistics; Natl. Center for Health Statistics; Natl. Center for Science and Engineering Statistics; Statistics of Income Div. of IRS; and Office of Research, Evaluation and Statistics, Social Security Adm.