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President's 2016 Budget Request Would Go a Long Way toward Restoring a Weakened Federal Statistical Infrastructure.

The President's request to Congress for 2016 funding of federal programs was released today (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Appendix>). In recent years, the President's budget has defined the upper limit on what actually gets appropriated by Congress. Today's announcement follows the December 11, 2014 announcement of FY 2015 appropriations, which kept the statistical agencies roughly at or below the level of funds for programs that they received in 2014. (<http://www.copafs.org/UserFiles/file/ConsolidatedandFurtherContinuingAppropriationsActof2015.pdf>)

The new budget requests for statistical agencies reflect the President's theme of investment in infrastructure, which includes federal statistics. Statistical agencies are very well supported by the President's request. One might have used the term "generous" except for the fact that the agencies, by and large, have been exceptionally budget constrained -- several to the point of discontinuing programs -- over the last 3 years. A table showing the absolute amounts of 2016 funding requested by the President was prepared by Steve Pierson of the American Statistical Association and is available at <http://community.amstat.org/blogs/steve-pierson/2015/01/15/fy16-statistical-agency-budget-developments>. Some highlights of the proposed budget follow.

The Bureau of the Census would get a \$30 million increase for current surveys and programs, and a much needed \$383 million increase for periodic censuses and programs under the President's 2016 request. The bulk of the increase for periodic programs can really be thought of as an investment since it would fund the research and testing that is necessary to improve efficiency and lower unit costs of the 2020 Decennial Census. Among the Census Bureau's proposed initiatives for 2016 is development of an Administrative Records Clearinghouse to increase federal government capacity for data-driven program decision making and to provide transparency about federal program effectiveness by developing a more comprehensive infrastructure for linking, sharing, and analyzing key administrative data.

The Census Bureau FY 2016 request also includes a proposed budget restructuring that would make research in support of periodic surveys counted as part of the current program. This would better protect Decennial preparedness and other research programs from the uncertainty of periodic program investment decisions by the Congress.

The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) would receive an increase of \$14 million, a large part of which is requested to support the plan to consolidate their office space with the Census Bureau in Suitland, MD. Still, enough would remain to fund two initiatives: finer energy accounting and economic statistics to evaluate the impacts of structural changes related to energy in the economy; and expanding and improving the data to inform trade negotiations and support trade promotion efforts.

The President's budget request for **The Bureau of Justice Statistics** provides an increase of \$28 million. Among the agency's use of these funds would be the continued improvement of criminal victimization statistics and an

increase in the use of administrative records data in police and correctional agencies to provide new and better crime statistics.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics requests \$41 million more in 2016 than in 2015. With that funding would come new responsibilities to conduct a supplement to the Current Population Survey and to expand and enhance the agency's Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS). In addition, the President's 2016 budget would provide funding to cover all of BLS's 2015 programs, and allow it to build staffing and staff training and development back (from 2014-2015 unduly reduced levels) to levels adequate to assure statistical quality and timeliness.

The Energy Information Administration (EIA) would see a \$14 million increase under the 2016 President's budget. Among its initiatives are expanding midterm energy analysis capabilities and addressing critical energy data gaps, including information to better understand the role of energy in transportation dynamics.

The USDA's **Economic Research Service (ERS)** would see an increase of \$1 million that would be used, among other things, to quantify the public and private drivers of farm water use for evidence-based responses to drought risk, and to analyze barriers to entry for new farmers and ranchers.

National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) would receive an additional \$3 million that would be used, among other things, to continue preparations for the 2017 Census of Agriculture and to maintain the annual Census of Agriculture Current Agriculture Industrial Reports.

The 2016 President's request for the **National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES)** is \$43 million greater than the 2015 appropriation. The NCES would: initiate a new round of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort to provide high-quality data in the area of early childhood development; collect selected National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey data every two years instead of every four years to provide more timely data on educational costs; and begin transitioning the National Assessment of Educational Progress from paper-and-pencil tests to technology-based assessments.

The **National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS)** would have \$5 million in FY 2016 budget authority to, among other things, investigate innovative ways to incorporate administrative data and electronic health record information into the family of health care provider surveys, expand electronic death reporting, and decrease turn-around time for access to vital statistics.

The **National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES)** would see a \$4 million increase with which it could expand the scope of administrative data sources and standardized tagging efforts to measure Research & Development trends, and address data gaps in the educational and career pathways of scientists and engineers and how they relate to federal efforts in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and other programs.

To prove that there is an exception to everything, the 2016 budget request for The Social Security Administration's **Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics (ORES)**, is actually \$3 million *below* the amount appropriated for 2015. This reduction will likely make it even more difficult for the Office to enhance the use of data for evidence-based evaluation of social security and retirement programs.

The Internal Revenue Service's **Statistics of Income (SOI)** division would receive a \$2 million increase over 2015 funding, with which it could improve tax data dissemination and explanation, and provide opportunities to estimate cross-sectoral tax administration and economic effects of changes in tax laws.