

## 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

Contacts: Tom Beers ([tbeers@nabe.com](mailto:tbeers@nabe.com)) 202-463-6223  
Katherine Smith ([kitty.smith@copafs.org](mailto:kitty.smith@copafs.org)) 703-836-0202