

FRIENDS *of the* BUREAU *of* LABOR STATISTICS

March 10, 2026

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito, Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services and Education
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt, Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services and Education
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin, Ranking
Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services and Education
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services and Education
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Capito, Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member Baldwin, and Ranking Member DeLauro,

We, the undersigned organizations and individual members of the Friends of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), thank you for providing the agency with a modest funding increase in the final Fiscal Year 2026 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriations bill. To ensure BLS can continue to fulfill its vital mission, we urge you to sustain and grow investment in the agency by **providing the Bureau with no less than \$754 million in FY 2027.**

This level of support for urgent, short-term and necessary, longer-term investment as explained below, is critical to ensure that the Bureau can make significant progress with regards to modernizing its data collection programs and continue delivering timely, relevant, and granular economic data to the American people. In addition, we have deep concern about the number of open positions at the Bureau, having lost approximately 25% of its staff through early separations since February 2025 and nearly 40% of leadership posts remain vacant. Unfortunately, a significant number of these separations involved senior staff with deep institutional and technical knowledge. BLS desperately needs to hire new talent to ensure that data releases remain accurate and timely. It is critical that BLS has the funding and the staff necessary to maintain their reporting processes and deliver timely data to the American people.

To avoid degradation of the quality of BLS data in FY27, we propose an increase of \$35.5 million (5%) over the FY 2026 enacted budget of \$708.5 million. These funds will allow BLS to train new staff, implement delayed modernization efforts, and sustain response rates in multiple programs.

In addition, BLS needs to innovate more rapidly, even as it continues to produce its critical statistics. The economic landscape can change very quickly - businesses and policymakers need information on the current economic climate and that requires a current, up-to-date approach to collecting and reporting data. To this end, we propose that a Modernization Fund be established at the Bureau and controlled by the Commissioner's office. The BLS Commissioner would work to ensure that the funds are allocated effectively to help utilize modern methodologies for the Bureau's critical programs. We propose an annual endowment of \$10 million for the fund to build and sustain the infrastructure needed to update these data programs.

We also recommend a technical change granting the BLS authority to spend its appropriated funds until fully expended. This change would allow BLS to continue producing economic releases during a government shutdown and more easily support multi-year innovation projects. A similar provision for the Energy

Information Agency reads, "For Department of Energy expenses necessary in carrying out the activities of the Energy Information Administration, \$135,000,000, *to remain available until expended.*(italics added)."

We urge that increases in funding for BLS be the start of a sustained effort to make BLS data more timely, granular, and accurate. The agency must be positioned to take full advantage of advances in data sourcing and statistical methods that must be the basis for sound decisions about public and private sector investment. To produce the high-quality statistics required for a thriving, 21st century economy, BLS must be a 21st century data agency. It is critical that BLS has the funding to take full advantage of alternative sources of data and apply advanced statistical matching and modelling techniques.

With this investment, BLS can take these steps to greatly reduce respondent burden and provide more return for Congress's investments in the agency, and improve coverage of the economy, especially at state and local levels. Your support will allow BLS to continue to inform evidence-based policymaking, smart program evaluation, rewarding career choices, and confident business investment.

Thank you for your dedicated interest in this critical part of our national data infrastructure and for considering our views as you prepare the FY 2027 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,
Erica L. Groshen, Ph.D.
Co-Chair, The Friends of BLS
BLS Commissioner 2013-2017

William W. Beach, D. Phil.
Co-Chair, The Friends of BLS
BLS Commissioner, 2019-2023

Paul Schroeder
Co-Chair, The Friends of BLS
Executive Director of the Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics

Organizations

American Statistical Association
Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM)
Association of Population Centers
Bendick and Egan Economic Consultants, Inc.
Center on Rural Innovation
Clayton Economics
Connecticut Arts Alliance
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council of Professional Organizations on Federal Statistics
Data Foundation
Economic Policy Institute
Haver Analytics
ICPSR, The Data Consortium
Local Advantage Mortgage, LLC
National Safety Council
Population Association of America
Regionomics LLC
Revelio Labs
Southwest Art Towns LLC
SRR Consulting
The W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research
Western Illinois Regional Council

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