



AEA Committee on Government Relations'

ANNOUNCEMENTS

OCTOBER 31, 2013

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 4

The Committee on Government Relations is a subcommittee of the American Economic Association charged with representing the interests of the economics profession in Washington DC and other locations around the country without taking a position on questions of economic policy or on any partisan matter.

Federal Government Shutdown Ends

NSF, NIH, the statistical agencies and the rest of the federal government re-opened on October 17th after Congress agreed to extend the Continuing Resolution (CR) that provided funding for FY2014 to January 15th. The overall discretionary funding provided by the CR is \$988 billion.

NSF has resumed accepting proposals through FastLane. The Foundation expects to announce revised dues dates for those proposals whose deadlines were between October 1 and 25. In addition, new funding opportunities will have proposal deadlines determined by program officers.

Since no proposal reviews were carried out during the shutdown, NSF will have to reschedule some of its review panel meetings, but the November meeting of the Economics Panel will not be affected. Those doing ad hoc mail reviews can now submit them through FastLane. New grants and other funding mechanisms will be processed as soon as is practicable.

NIH announced it is working to reestablish dates for grant and contract submissions, decide how to handle missed review meetings, and reschedule dates for training and other activities that were cancelled due to the government closure. According to the interim guidance on resumption of NIH extramural activities, all October grant application submission deadlines will be rescheduled to the November timeframe. Specific dates will be announced in a future Notice. Additionally, peer review meetings that were scheduled for October 1-17 are being rescheduled. The specific revised dates will be published in the NIH Guide.

Most statistical agencies have posted their revised release schedules and some also have announced changes in their programs at least during the CR.

- For the Bureau of Economic Analysis go to http://www.bea.gov/newsreleases/general/pdf/media_advisory_on_new_release_dates.pdf;
- the Bureau of Labor Statistics, http://bls.gov/bls/updated_release_schedule.htm;
- the Census, American Community Survey and Supplemental Poverty, http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/american_community_survey_acs/cb13-179.html;
- Census, Economic Indicators, http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/economic_surveys/cb13-175.html;
- and the Economic Research Service, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/about->

2013 Nobel in Economics

The 2013 Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel was awarded jointly to Eugene F. Fama, Lars Peter Hansen and Robert J. Shiller "for their empirical analysis of asset prices". Go to

http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/economic-sciences/.

House Oversight Hearings on 2020 Census

The House Oversight and Government Reform Committee's Subcommittee on the Federal Workforce, U.S. Postal Service, and the Census, held a hearing entitled "Ensuring an Accurate and Affordable 2020 Census" on September 11th.

Subcommittee Chairman Rep. Blake Farenthold (R-TX) cited the rising costs of conducting the decennial census, which cost \$14.7 billion for 2010, and, if recent trends hold, could cost \$25 billion for 2020. The witnesses at the hearing were newly-confirmed Census Bureau Director John Thompson, Robert Goldenkoff, Director of Strategic Issues at the Government Accountability Office (GAO), and Carol Cha, Director of Information Technology (IT) at the GAO.

Thompson predicted that under its current plan, the 2020 Census will be less costly and deliver faster results than the 2010 count. The Bureau is looking into reengineering its field data collection, making better use of previously collected government data, using the Internet as the primary response option, and relying on geographical tools and datasets to reduce or eliminate the need to physically canvas. According to Goldenkoff counting each housing unit is no longer financially sustainable. In 1970, it cost \$16 to evaluate each housing unit (in 2010 dollars); in 2010, it costs \$98 per housing unit. Thompson noted that the Bureau has already postponed some of its scheduled research and testing from 2013 to 2014.

Goldenkoff noted that cuts can be particularly harmful to the Census because it has scrapped its old approach, making research and testing critical to keeping costs low.

COPAFS Highlights Data Needs

The Coalition of Professional Statistical Associations met on September 20th. Presentations were made by

- Steven B. Cohen, Director, Center for Financing, Access and Cost Trends, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (ARQH) on "Essential Data Needs to Inform the Affordable Care Act "
- Walter J. Holmes, SAHIE Team Lead, U.S. Census Bureau on "An Interactive Overview of Small Area Health Insurance"
- Clifford Johnson, Former NHANES Director, National Center for Health Statistics on "The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES)" and
- Vince Breneman, Research Support Branch Chief, Economic Research Service on "The Food Environment Atlas: A Data Mashup to inform Research Questions"

For more information on these presentations go to

http://www.copafs.org/meetings/september_2013.aspx

NAS Policy Roundtable on Behavioral Economics & Policy

On September 24th the National Academy of Science Policy Roundtable Seminar on the Behavioral and Social Sciences discussed "The Application of Behavioral Economics to Public Policies and Program." The Roundtable Chair was David Ellwood, Kennedy School of Government. Sendhil Mullainathan (Economics, Harvard), Josh Wright (ideas42), Maya Shankar (Office of Science and Technology Policy) gave presentations. Shankar announced the formation of a working group patterned on the UK's Behavioral Insights Team with nodes within different federal agencies to apply behavioral economics to identify small subtle changes that can have a significant impact on behavior. Noami Goldstein (ASPE, HHS), Mary Bohman (ERS, USDA) and John Laub (Maryland formerly DOJ) reviewed some of the applications of behavioral economics in government agencies.

For more information on OSTP Social and Behavioral Science Team see http://mobile.nytimes.com/2013/08/25/business/public-policies-made-to-fit-people.html?_r=1

Reproducibility of NIH Research

NIH Deputy Director Lawrence Tabak spoke at several of the council meetings on the topic of data transparency and reproducibility of research results. According to Tabak the recommendations by the agency to address the problems of replication include:

- Discuss reproducibility and transparency of research findings with their stakeholder communities to alert them to the issues and solicit feedback by the end of the 2013 calendar year;
- Integrate modules and/or courses on experimental design into existing required training courses and award terms and conditions;
- Consider options for an evaluation process of the "scientific premise" of a grant application;
- Collaborate further with scientific journals and the scientific community on efforts to improve rigor;
- Select institutes and centers will perform pilot evaluations of changes to bio-sketch to include elements that aid in framing the PIs work and describing the applicants' contribution to the publications cited;
- Use guidelines and/or checklists to systematically evaluate grant applications; and
- Assess supporting replication/reproducibility studies or centers.

For more information on the reproducibility of research results see <https://www.scienceexchange.com/reproducibility>

NICHD Implements Vision

Catherine Spong, director, NICHD's Division of Extramural Research, and Alan Guttmacher, NICHD director, provided an update of the implementation of the NICHD Vision plan at the 151st meeting of the NICHD's advisory council. According to Spong, looking across the vision, three areas emerged with public health impact, scientific opportunity and require NICHD leadership: intrauterine assessment of placental and fetal function, contraception, and long-term implication(s) of assisted reproductive technologies (ART). The mechanisms the institute intends to use to

	<p>move these areas forward include launching new branches, Pediatric Trauma and Critical Illness (PTCI) and Gynecologic Health and Disease Branch(GHDB), with portfolio development and support. But Spong pointed out that the funding for the strategic areas is relative small. She emphasized that 75 percent of NICHD's budget is spent on investigator-initiated projects, emphasizing that this will not change.</p>
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