

December 8, 2008

TO: American Economic Association Executive Committee  
FROM: Katharine G. Abraham, Chair  
American Economic Association Committee on Economic Statistics  
SUBJECT: Annual Report on Committee's Activities

The current members of the Committee on Economic Statistics are Katharine Abraham, University of Maryland (chair); Robert Feenstra, University of California, Davis; Dennis Fixler, Bureau of Economic Analysis; Barbara Fraumeni, University of Southern Maine; David Johnson, Census Bureau; Jonathan Parker, Northwestern University; Charles Schultze, Brookings Institution; Matthew Shapiro, University of Michigan; and Jack Triplett, Brookings Institution. The Committee met by phone three times during 2008, in February, May and November.

In January 2007, the Executive Committee voted to give the Committee standing authority to organize three sessions each year for inclusion on the program of the Association's annual meeting. At its April 2008 meeting, the Executive Committee voted to allow the Committee to designate one session each year for publication in the annual Papers and Proceedings volume. Two sessions organized by the Committee – one titled "Finding Truth in More than One Place: Improving Statistics by Integrating Survey and Administrative Data," arranged by committee member David Johnson, and a second titled "Implementation of a New Architecture for the U.S. National Accounts," arranged by former committee member Dale Jorgenson – will appear on the program for the January 2009 meeting. A third planned session, arranged by Jack Triplett, was withdrawn due to a delay in the release of the National Academy of Sciences report on health accounting that was to be discussed. For the January 2010 meeting, the committee circulated a call for papers on the measurement of intangibles, trade in services and other economic measurement topics. There was a good response to the call for papers and the submissions received will form the basis for the committee's sessions at the 2010 meeting.

The Committee also has undertaken the task of commissioning reviews of needs for data in particular subject matter areas. A group co-chaired by Robert Feenstra and Robert Lipsey is close to completing a draft report on data needs for research on international trade that will be discussed at next year's National Bureau of Economic Research Summer Institute meetings and at a forthcoming meeting of the Federal Economic Statistics Advisory Committee. The Committee is in the early stages of planning for a report on needs for data on the financial sector, with an emphasis on understanding access to credit and its consequences.

To ensure that papers presented at the sessions on economic measurement organized by the Committee and the reports on data needs it commissions are readily accessible to interested persons, the Committee has developed a Committee website where these and other informational items are posted. The Committee website may be accessed through the main Association website.

The Committee continues to monitor developments with regard to passage of legislation to facilitate the sharing of business information for statistical purposes, but there was little opportunity for constructive engagement on that topic during the calendar year. There are a number of other committees and groups whose interests overlap with those of the Committee and the Committee has established liaison relationships with these entities.