

January 2019

TO: AMERICAN ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION

FROM: Phillip Swagel, Chair, American Economic Association Committee on Government Relations

RE: Annual Report for 2018

Members of the American Economic Association Committee on Government Relations (CGR) in 2018 are: Phillip Swagel (University of Maryland), Chair; Sandra Black (University of Texas), through Spring 2018; Leemore Dafney (Harvard Business School); Maurine Haver (Haver Analytics); Susan Houseman (UpJohn Institute); Bruce Meyer (University of Chicago); Karen Palmer (Resources for the Future); Nina Pavcnik (Dartmouth University); Fiona Scott Morton (Yale University); Betsey Stevenson (University of Michigan); and Ken Troske (University of Kentucky). Katherine (Kitty) Smith Evans staffs the Committee.

The CGR was established in 2009 to represent the interests of the economics profession in Washington, D.C. and other locations around the country. A description of the Committee's primary activities may be found on its website. As is true of the AEA, the Committee does not take positions on questions of economic policy or on any partisan matter.

Meetings: The Committee met by phone 9 times in 2018. Kitty Smith Evans also met frequently with representatives of the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) and other organizations whose interests overlap with those of the AEA, and with relevant staff at the American Association for the Advancement of Science, National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA).

Issues: Policy discussions surrounding statistical issues were a common thread across committee activities. Much of the work of the committee was done jointly or in parallel with the AEA Committee on Economic Statistics.

1. The committee discussed the proposed question on Citizenship in the 2020 Census, focusing on concerns over the impact on the accuracy of the Census. Together with the statistics committee, the CGR submitted a formal comment to the Commerce Department regarding issues with the Census, including the citizenship question. (<https://www.aeaweb.org/content/file?id=7684>).
2. AEACGR members helped developed the Statement on Principles of Economic Measurement that was approved by the AEA Executive Committee (<https://www.aeaweb.org/content/file?id=6847>). The Statement highlights the scientific principles and challenges involved with devising accurate economic statistics, and is useful for communicating with government officials and the public. Hard copies of the Statement have been distributed to a wide range of Executive Branch officials, Congressional staff, and attendees of meetings on related topics.
3. Together with the AEA Committee on Economic Statistics, AEACGR issued a statement of support for the proposal to move the Bureau of Labor Statistics from the Department of Labor to the Department of Commerce (<https://www.aeaweb.org/content/file?id=8362>). This statement supports the proposal to move the BLS to the Commerce Department "because of the benefits to data users of closer integration between BLS and the other major economic statistics agencies."

4. AEACGR co-signed a letter, jointly with the AEA Committee on Economic Statistics, to Senate and House agricultural appropriators and authorizing committee leadership, outlining the expected consequences for statistical quality and integrity of the USDA Secretary's announced decision to shift the Economic Research Service from under its Research and Education mission area to the Secretary's Office, and to move the majority of the agency's staff to outside the Washington, DC National Capitol Area.
(<https://www.aeaweb.org/content/file?id=8484>).

Outreach and Representation:

1. Economists Georgia Kosmopoulou, University of Oklahoma, Peter Rousseau, AEA and Vanderbilt University, Kitty Smith Evans, AEA, and AEA member Andrew Reamer represented AEA at COSSA's 2018 Science Policy Conference and Social Science Advocacy Day. Kitty Smith Evans led a group that visited the offices of Senator James Lankford, Senator James Imhofe, Senator Lamar Alexander, Senator Bob Corker, Representative Jim Cooper, and Representative Tom Cole, to inform their staff about economic research at individuals' institutions and to stress the value of social science research generally. The AEA Statement of Principles of Economic Measurement was distributed at these meetings.
2. Economist Bruce Sacerdote, Dartmouth University, was recruited by the AEACGR as the AEA representative to the Coalition on National Science Funding (CNSF) 2018 Congressional Exhibition and Reception. At the Exhibition, Sacerdote presented a poster, *Identifying and Reducing Barriers to College and Economic Success* which drew a lot of attention and engaged, among others, U.S. Representative Jerry McNerny of California and Sara Palasits, who is on the staff of the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology. Sacerdote and Kitty Smith Evans also visited the office of Senator Jeanne Shaheen (NH) to talk about Sacerdote's research and the value of economic research, in general.

Policy Sessions at ASSA meetings: The AEA Committee on Government Relations organized a panel session on health policy for the 2019 ASSA Meetings and a session on Tax Policy at the 2018 ASSA meetings.