

December 10, 2020

TO: AMERICAN ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION

FROM: Kenneth Troske, Chair, American Economic Association Committee on Government Relations (AEA CGR)

RE: Annual Committee on Government Relations Report for 2020

Members of the American Economic Association Committee on Government Relations (CGR) in 2020 were: Kenneth Troske (University of Kentucky), Chair; Joe Aldy (Harvard University)- Since October 2020; Karen Dynan (Harvard University); Sherry Glied (New York University) – Since March 2020; Thomas Holmes (University of Minnesota); Bruce Meyer (University of Chicago); Karen Palmer (Resources for the Future) -January-September 2020; Nina Pavcnik (Dartmouth University); Fiona Scott Morton (Yale University); Jay Shambaugh (George Washington University); and Betsey Stevenson (University of Michigan). 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 10 times in 2020. 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 Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), attending membership, informational and advisory committee meetings.

**Issues:** In 2020, the AEA CGR monitored actions by Congressional Appropriations committees to fund government science and statistical agencies of importance to AEA members. The Committee took on as a priority and followed closely the Federal government's progress toward implementing the 2018 Foundations for Evidence Based Policymaking Act and the availability of and access to accurate federal statistics for economic research. The following letters and comments regarding Congressional or Executive Branch actions were written and delivered.

1. **The Committee filed a formal comment on the Department of Homeland Security's proposed Rule on the duration of student visa status.** The Rule would have limited to 4 years the duration of visas for most foreign students in U.S. educational programs. The effects on, especially, foreign graduate students would be exceptionally costly - to the students themselves, to economics graduate programs, and to the nation. See the AEACGR Regulatory comment at: <https://www.aeaweb.org/content/file?id=13348>
2. Jointly with the AEA Committee on Economic Statistics, AEACGR made three statements regarding data sharing, and the accuracy of 2020 Decennial Census results:
  - a. **Statement on Desirable Characteristics of Managing and Sharing Data from Federally Funded Research** (jointly with the AEA Committee on Economic Statistics) <https://www.aeaweb.org/content/file?id=11793>

- b. **Statement on the Need for Accurate and Reliable Data from the 2020 Decennial Census** (jointly with the AEA Committee on Economic Statistics) <https://www.aeaweb.org/content/file?id=12542>
    - c. **Letter urging Congress to extend the deadline for 2020 Census** (jointly with the AEA Committee on Economic Statistics) <https://www.aeaweb.org/content/file?id=12799>
  3. The AEACGR and AEASat collaborated on the development and dissemination of 9 recommendations to the Biden-Harris Transition Teams concerned with economics. **Necessary Improvement in the U.S. Statistical Infrastructure: A Report to Inform the Biden-Harris Transition** (<https://www.aeaweb.org/content/file?id=13507>) was sent to Transition Team members on the Commerce, Labor, and Treasury Departments, CEA, OMB, and OSTP, and continues to be distributed formally and via social media, including to new economics nominees to the Biden Cabinet.
  4. Kitty Smith Evans organized or joined groups organized by a variety of partner organizations to educate Republican and Democratic policymakers and their advisors on issues affecting AEA members or elucidated by economists' data and research findings. She represented AEA at COSSA's 2020 Science Policy Conference and Social Science Advocacy Day, leading a team of social scientists on (virtual) visits with the offices of Senators Van Hollen and Cardin, and Representatives Hoyer, Raskin, and Sarbanes.

#### **Outreach and Representation:**

- **Policy Session for the 2021 ASSA meetings:** The AEA Committee on Government Relations organized a panel session involving experienced policy educators. Entitled "So...You Want Your Research to Inform Policy Decision Making?," it features presentations by Ben Bernanke, Maureen Cropper, Doug Elmendorf, Sherry Glied, and Betsey Stevenson. See: <https://www.aeaweb.org/conference/2021/preliminary/1543?q=eNo1jL0KgDAMhN8lcwcdXFwc nR3dJWjAoP0hqYpI391Wcfu-4-5uUFJl74YrELT3r9BCDclcMKr66RUDkcRm7EgcupVyooQyLT1bjlrGuMfFy7ihxv9gxitjWbOljw6ms7 QlhBw0FaTOXDDNeCrS>
- Kitty Smith Evans represented AEA in attending two (virtual) 2020 National Science Foundation meetings concerning its Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic (SBE) Sciences.

#### **Communication with AEA Members about the activities of the CGR**

- The formal comments, statements and letters made and sent by the Committee were all featured on Twitter and EconTwitter. The Report to Inform the Biden-Harris Transition Team was also posted on EconSpark and LinkedIn. Considerable attention to the social media postings indicates interest by AEA members and others in the activities of the CGR.
- The Web site for the AEA CGR is undergoing an extensive make-over to eliminate or archive less necessary or grossly out-of-date pages and to reorganize and consolidate pages of greatest

interest to AEA members. Upon completion of the overhaul, an announcement will be made to AEA members inviting them to take a look at the site, and periodic EconTwitter posts will make members aware of new information on the site.