

Information Items for AEA Committees on Economic Statistics and Government Relations

April 25 – May 24, 2021

- 1. Rob Santos has been nominated to be Director of the Census Bureau, and Ken Prewitt will be appointed as a Special Assistant to the Director.** Santos is vice president and chief methodologist at the Urban Institute (<https://www.urban.org/author/robert-santos>). Prewitt is the Carnegie Professor of Public Affairs in Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, and a former Director of the Census Bureau (<https://www.sipa.columbia.edu/faculty-research/faculty-directory/kenneth-prewitt>).
- 2. Senator Schatz and Rep Murkowski Reintroduce Bill to Extend Key Deadlines For 2020 Census to Ensure an Accurate Count.** Here is their press release <https://www.schatz.senate.gov/press-releases/schatz-murkowski-reintroduce-bill-to-extend-key-deadlines-for-2020-census-ensure-accurate-count> and NPR's Hansi Lo Wang report on why and what it means <https://www.npr.org/2021/04/20/984822577/after-a-disrupted-census-congress-tries-again-to-extend-deadlines-for-results>
- 3. The National Academies, Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT), has released the 7th Edition of its *Principles and Practices for a Federal Statistical Agency*.** A Preprint copy of the report is available at <https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/7th-edition-of-principles-and-practices-for-a-federal-statistical-agency>
- 4. CNSTAT has issued a consensus report recommending *A Satellite Account to Measure the Retail Transformation*.** It describes the dramatic changes in retail trade in the United States over the past several decades, and its panel evaluates those changes and assesses measures of employment and labor productivity for the sector. The consensus is for a new satellite account that could measure retail-related employment and labor productivity in ways to better capture this transformation. <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/26101/a-satellite-account-to-measure-the-retail-transformation-organizational-conceptual>
- 5. The Committee on National Statistics seeks nominations for members of two (2) panels to produce complementary reports on topics that will help guide the development of a vision for a new data infrastructure for federal statistics and social and economic research in the 21st century.** Each panel will convene a 1.5- day virtual public workshop and issue a report summarizing the committee's findings and conclusions. Nominations are due by May 21 at <https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/6332010/Toward-a-Vision-for-a-New-Data-Infrastructure-for-Federal-Statistics-and-Social-and-Economic-Research-in-the-21st-Century>.
- 6. The Committee on National Statistics' Panel on Evaluation and Improvements to the Supplemental Poverty Measure invites public comments from researchers, policy makers, and anti-poverty advocacy groups on how the SPM could be improved to better inform policy formation and public understanding of the levels and trends in needs among people with low incomes.** Comment memos should outline your views on what you see as the strengths of the SPM as well as any areas in need of improvement. Comments are due June 19, 2021. For additional information on the panel's statement of task and procedure for submitting comments, see: *Evaluation and Improvements to the Supplemental Poverty Measure Public Announcement 1 | National Academies* (<https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/evaluation-and-improvements-to-the-supplemental-poverty-measure>).

7. **OECD has issued a new report, *Going for Growth 2021*.** The report identifies country-specific structural policy priorities for the recovery across OECD and key non-member countries. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/economic-policy-reforms-2021_3c796721-en
8. **The Council of Economic Advisors has released a Briefing on the Pandemic's Effect on Measured Wage Growth:** <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/blog/2021/04/19/the-pandemics-effect-on-measured-wage-growth/>
9. **National Science Foundation has issued a Request for Information to inform its thinking about datasets to support research.** The RFI seeks input from the community on the specific needs related to collecting, sharing, and utilizing public or private datasets for networking and computer systems research, and any challenges associated with each. The input could identify requirements for datasets that may include, but are not limited to, spectrum data, physical layer data, network and internet measurement data, workload data, power/performance data, and other systems data. NSF recognizes that some datasets currently exist but is interested in needs that are not currently met by these existing datasets, conventions or formats that may broaden the usability of the data, and ways in which additional high-quality datasets may be made available to the research community. **NSF is interested in assessing where research progress is slowed due to the lack of datasets that may either already exist or can be generated using existing infrastructure (including NSF-funded infrastructure).** The deadline for response was May 15, 2021.
10. **The Endless Frontier Bill is reintroduced.** On April 21, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, Senator Todd Young, Representative Ro Khanna, and Representative Mike Gallagher reintroduced the Endless Frontier Act (<https://bit.ly/2TGZSv2>), a \$100 billion dollar proposal to ramp up investment in technology research and development aimed at countering China and ensuring American leadership in innovation.

Should it pass, the bill would have major implications for the National Science Foundation (NSF). It would invest \$100 billion over 5 years in a new Directorate for Technology and Innovation within NSF, focused on translational research to bridge the gap between basic science and technology commercialization. The bill does not directly authorize funding increases across the other research directorates, including the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences and Education and Human Resources Directorates which are underfunded. However, it requires that the new directorate use at least 15 percent of its funding to partner with the other directorates on basic and use-inspired research with implications for technology development.

Funding for the new directorate would be held outside of NSF in an "Endless Frontier Fund" managed by the director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). In addition to \$100 billion for NSF, the fund would include over \$12 billion for technology and manufacturing programs at the Department of Commerce.

The legislation raises serious questions. Without directly authorizing additional spending across the research directorates, the Endless Frontier Act proposes to create a single directorate with a budget over 10 times that of the entire agency as it exists today. The advocacy community has expressed concern that such a focused investment in use-inspired research may drown out the importance of curiosity-inspired basic research that is the core of NSF's mission. Such an approach also fails to adequately invest in fundamental research that creates the foundation for technological advances in the

long term. Providing this funding in an externally managed account also detracts from NSF's independence to pursue the highest quality science.

- 11. The House Alternative NSF Bill.** A much less radical NSF authorization bill, the **NSF for the Future Act of 2021** envisions an agency with an annual budget that more than doubles over five years, accelerates interdisciplinary research, improves STEM education and research training, and strengthens a commitment to diversity, inclusion, open access, and research security. The bill is considered a bi-partisan measure, with the committee's Ranking Republican Member, Frank Lucas (R-OK) and both the chairwoman and ranking member of the House Science Committee's Research Subcommittee signing on as original cosponsors.

Under the bill, overall funding for current programs at NSF would increase by roughly \$2 billion in Fiscal Year 2022 (to \$10.5 billion) and grow at an average annual rate of 6% through 2026. The bill would create a new NSF directorate: the Directorate for Science and Engineering Solutions (SES), which would focus on interdisciplinary, translational research and encourage partnerships and collaborations—including with nontraditional players. That directorate, which would operate in parallel to the other existing directorates, would receive \$1 billion in 2022 and receive steady increases through 2026. All told, between the growth in the traditional NSF budget and the ramp up of the new SES directorate, the overall budget for the NSF would double by 2026.

The House Bill also incorporates an Amendment (by Repr. Don Beyer) to create a National Secure Data Service Demonstration project managed by NSF's National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics. The proposal is based on the Nick Hart/Nancy Potok report, *Modernizing U.S. Data Infrastructure: Design Considerations for Implementing a National Secure Data Service to Improve Statistics and Evidence Building* (<https://www.datafoundation.org/modernizing-us-data-infrastructure-2020>).

- 12. On May 8, the AEASat Report on Economic Measurement of Consequences of Systemic Racism: Challenges and Opportunities** (<https://www.aeaweb.org/content/file?id=14646>) **was released and widely distributed to some fanfare.** Randy Akee, AEASat member, spoke, by invitation to CEA members and staff on the findings of the report and was also invited to testify before a panel of the House Ways and Means Committee. Members of AEASat will also brief new Commerce Chief Economist, Ronnie Chatterji, on the report's findings and implications for data collection at Commerce.
- 13. On May 21, the Census Bureau made an announcement of its intent to synthesize accessible ACS data.** A Twitter thread by Steve Ruggles (<https://twitter.com/HistDem>) summarized the Census plan and generated thousands of reactions, foretelling a public debate.
- 14. A general note of interest:** The Association of Public Data Users (APDU) maintains a running list of requests for comment issued by statistical and related agencies: <https://www.apdu.org/advocacy/opportunities-for-public-comment/calls-for-comment/>