

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 2021

Members of the American Economic Association Committee on Government Relations (CGR) in 2021 were: Kenneth Troske (University of Kentucky), Chair; Joe Aldy (Harvard University); Karen Dynan (Harvard University); Sherry Glied (New York University); Thomas Holmes (University of Minnesota); Bruce Meyer (University of Chicago); Fiona Scott Morton (Yale University); Jay Shambaugh (George Washington University); Betsey Stevenson (University of Michigan); and Steve Trejo (Univ. of Texas at Austin). 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 (<https://www.aeaweb.org/about-aea/committees/government-relations>). 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 2021. 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 (AAAS), National Science Foundation (NSF), the Federation of Brain and Behavioral Sciences (FABBS), the Data Foundation, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), attending membership, informational and advisory committee meetings.

Issues: In 2021, 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, including the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Data for Evidence Building (ACDEB). It has also followed Congressional actions that would, if passed, limit the opportunity for economists to conduct specific types of research.

- The CGR issued (jointly with the AEASat Committee) a series of pointed answers to various questions posed by the Advisory Committee on Data for Evidence Building (ACDEB) <https://www.aeaweb.org/content/file?id=13947>
- In response to a December 2, 2021 Federal Register Request for Comment on the first annual report of the ACDEB, the CGR sent a series of comments on the recommendations contained in that first ACDEB report.
- The CGR discussed and is monitoring concern expressed in a letter from Senators Crapo and Grassley to the Senate Finance Committee that proposes a series of actions on IRS data protection, including elimination of the Joint Statistical Research Program of the Statistics of Income Division of the IRS. This program, that allows limited access by collaborating economists to IRS tax microdata, has been a boon for economists' research on factors that affect earning power. If this concern blooms into proposed legislation, the CGR stands ready to comment.
- The CGR jointly released, with the AEASat, a statement on "How Data Synch Can Save U.S. Official Statistics" (<https://www.aeaweb.org/content/file?id=15315>), for use by AEA Committee members and groups with which AEA collaborates, in explaining the need for synchronization of

business data across the three principal economic statistical agencies. This will be an important document in a planned campaign to promote the need for synchronization of business data across the three principal economic statistics agencies.

- The CGR and AEAStat Committees jointly developed an AEA-oriented statement on “Needed Improvement in the U.S. Statistical Infrastructure” (<https://www.aeaweb.org/content/file?id=13507>), as a vehicle for briefing new members of the Biden/Harris Administration. The Statement was widely distributed and formed the basis for discussion with a selection of new White House and Cabinet Department policy leaders, as well as customized letters to Labor Secretary Marty Walsh, Agriculture Secretary, Tom Vilsack, Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, Commerce Secretary, and Janet Yellen, Treasury Secretary.
- CGR Member, Joe Aldy, is using the Administration’s push for evidence-informed policy as a means for more directly inserting economics in the climate change policy space.

AEA 2022 Policy Session

- CGR Chair, Ken Troske, organized a panel of high level and highly informed people for a policy session for the 2022 AEA meetings, on **Increased Access to Administrative Data for Policy Research: Its Value and How We Get There** <https://www.aeaweb.org/conference/2022/preliminary/1437?q=eNqrVipOLS7OzM8LqSxIVbKqh nGvRjQMIWp1lBKLi OTgRwIHawS1KjCXCarpCi ODsVyE9JrIRKZOamQlhlmanlIEOKCggAAqYGSrW 1XDBcMPUd0A>, <https://www.aeaweb.org/conference/2022/preliminary/1437>.

Coordination and Collaboration with other Organizations

Kitty Smith Evans and Ken Troske represented AEA in the Consortium of Social Science Association’s (COSSA) virtual Science Advocacy Day, a showcase for Congressional members of useful and exciting social science projects. Kitty also attended monthly Government Relations meetings with COSSA member organizations to learn about others’ activities and coordinate when appropriate. AEA is a governing member of COSSA.

On behalf of the CGR, Kitty keeps in touch with leadership of the NSF Economics Program, and the National Institutes of Health Office of Behavioral and Social Science Research, making sure that any major changes in funding priorities, approaches, or competitive funding opportunities are communicated to AEA members.