Information Items for AEA Committee on Government Relations
October 18, 2021

1. Policy Session for the 2022 ASSA Meeting.

The 2022 Policy Session, organized and to be Chaired by Ken, is “Increased Access to Administrative Data for Policy Research: Its Value and How We Get There.” It will take place (virtually) on Friday, January 7, 2022, from 3:45-5:45. See its abstract and interesting range of panelists at: American Economic Association (aeaweb.org).

Be there or be square.

2. Letter from Senators Crapo and Grassley regarding alleged leaks of IRS data

This letter (crapo_grassley_letter_to_tigta.pdf (senate.gov)) raises concerns about potential hacks or leaks of confidential IRS data. Of possible concern for AEA members is its call-out of the Joint Statistical Research Program of the Statistics of Income Division of the IRS (https://www.irs.gov/statistics/soi-tax-stats-joint-statistical-research-program) for scrutiny. This program allows economic researchers to access restricted microdata under conditions required co-research with IRS Statistics of Income economists, and a designation of outside researchers as temporary IRS employees. A well-known example of studies conducted under those stipulations is Raj Chetty’s examination of childhood education variables as a predictor of eventual income levels. Another worry is that increased concern about the confidentiality of IRS data could dampen or erase progress made this year through the Treasury Department’s plan for actions to allow data synchronization.

Potential AEA responses to this letter and subsequent actions will be a topic of discussion.

3. Vacancy Announcement (finally!) for the position of the OMB’s Chief Statistician.

Economists with familiarity and experience with the Federal Statistical System could be ideal candidates for this Senior Executive job. The Chief Statistician of the United States (full title) coordinates and wields considerable influence over the collection, accuracy, access to, and periodicity of statistical collections and, increasingly, on non-survey methodologies for federal data. The position has been vacant for over 2 years.

AEASTat members are encouraged to circulate the position announcement among potential candidates, as it would be valuable to see an economist in the position. The position announcement closes November 4, 2021: USAJOBS - Job Announcement