

October 1, 2017

Senator William "Thad" Cochran, Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Capitol Building, S-128
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Patrick J. Leahy, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Russell Senate Office Building, SR-437
Washington, DC 20510-4502

Dear Senators Cochran and Leahy,

We write to offer our services to you and to underscore the importance of economic science and statistics in contributing to U.S. businesses and commerce, evidence-based policymaking, public service, and the members of the American Economic Association (AEA).

The AEA has over 20,000 economist members working in the private and public sectors and in academia. We include chief economists of corporations, think-tank economists from different points of view, applied and theoretical researchers, and leaders and staff of important government agencies. The AEA espouses adequate support of federal statistical agencies and federal funding opportunities for social, behavioral and economic sciences

As the recent report by the bi-partisan Commission on Evidence-Based Policy (CEP) makes clear, there are a number of steps that can be taken to improve access to federal statistics while bolstering public data privacy. Following some of the CEP's recommendations will require statistical agencies to support new programs, even as many of them are struggling to maintain the quality of their current programs. Under current programs, federal statistics have exceptional value to business contracting, hiring, siting, investment, and contraction or expansion decisions. Current federal statistical products are essential to the Federal Reserve in making decisions about interest rates. They are invaluable to cities' and local communities' development planning; and, as the CEP report recognizes, in evaluating and diagnosing elements of the relative success of federal programs. Our members rely on technically accurate, timely, and representative federal data to investigate how economic behavior is influenced by singular or combinations of events, policies, and other phenomena, for the betterment of society.

We applaud the Senate's record of support for scientific independence of federal research program decision making. The National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health are funders of basic and innovative work in the economic sciences. We hope that these agencies will continue to be free to determine how their research funds are allocated across biological, physical, earth, and social and economic sciences.

If, during your FY 2018 and FY 2019 appropriations process you identify the need for economic consultation or expert witnesses, please feel free to contact the AEA for nonpartisan slates of expert candidates.

With thanks and best wishes for the appropriation seasons ahead.

Sincerely,

John C. Haltiwanger

Chair, Committee on Economic Statistics, American Economic Association, and
Distinguished University Professor, Department of Economics, University of Maryland

Phillip Swagel

Chair, Committee on Government Relations, American Economic Association, and
Professor in International Economic Policy at the University of Maryland School of Public Policy.

Contact: Katherine Smith Evans, Director of Government Relations, AEA. Kitty.s.evans@aeapubs.org or
301-97-1644

cc: Senator Richard C. Shelby, Chairman, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and Science
Appropriations

Senator Jeanne Shaheen, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and Science
Appropriations

Senator Roy Blunt, Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies' Appropriations

Senator Patty Murray, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies' Appropriations