

**Testimony of
Ron Wasserstein, Executive Director, American Statistical Association (ASA)
to the
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee, House Appropriations Committee
Honorable Frank Wolf, Chairman
Honorable Chaka Fattah, Ranking Member
March 22, 2012**

Chairman Wolf, Ranking Member Fattah, and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am here today on behalf of the American Statistical Association (ASA) to support the FY13 budgets for several agencies in the FY13 Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill. Specifically, the ASA supports the FY13 budget requests of \$7.373 billion for the National Science Foundation (NSF), \$970 million for the U.S. Census Bureau, \$97 million for the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), \$60 million for the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), and the \$5 million proposed in the NIST budget to improve the science in forensic science.

The ASA is the professional association of more than 18,000 statisticians in industry, academia and government. As the world's largest community of statisticians and the second oldest continuously operating professional society in the United States, the ASA promotes sound statistical practice to inform public policy and improve human welfare by supporting excellence in the development, application, and dissemination of statistical science through meetings, publications, membership services, education, and accreditation.

While one might think of these afore-named agencies as unrelated, there is a strong connection between the research and statistical agencies. NSF funding supports the research that fuels American innovation, which, in turn, drives economic growth and job creation. The BEA and Census Bureau help provide the data to help navigate economic recovery in the ultra-competitive global market.

Since many others today are testifying in support of the NSF budget, I will begin with the statistical agencies.

Fully funding the FY13 requests for Census and BEA is important for three reasons. Their data facilitate: i) economic growth and development; ii) efficient government; and iii) the saving of taxpayer money.

- i. **Economic growth and development:** the private sector makes heavy use of Census Bureau and BEA data in its decision-making, whether it be determining where to place a new retail outlet or siting a manufacturing plant. The data help answer questions on available workforce, potential customer base, infrastructure and inventory. The business community has been loud and clear over the last year on how important this data is to them. The higher the quality of the data, the most confidence the business community can have in the success of their job-creating investments.

- ii. **Efficient government:** Census data help to guide federal spending on everything from Veterans Affairs to transportation to Medicare. High quality data helps to avoid the scenario of new roads or other federal investments not being used.
- iii. **Saving taxpayer money:** the GAO has said the 2020 Decennial Census could cost \$17 billion dollars more than the 2010 Census, or more than double, unless major design changes are made. With 2020 census research and planning well underway – \$131 million requested in FY13 for research and development – underfunding Census in these early planning years could cost taxpayers billions of dollars down the road.

The FY13 request for BJS would allow the agency to continue its improvements to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). This survey is unique because it is the only national comprehensive survey that provides crime statistics from the victim's perspective and so is an important complement to the crime statistics provided from law enforcement. Without the FY13 level, BJS would not be able to provide crime data on a more regional level or to improve measurement of rape and sexual assaults. Just as it is important to understand population or health trends on a sub-national level, so too can sub-national crime data help law enforcement officials and policymakers better attend public safety. Just as important, if not more so, the FY13 request would allow research to improve the measurement of rape and sexual assault. As the most under-reported crimes in the United States, it is imperative to better understand how to measure them in order to address these crimes.

Let me turn now to the National Science Foundation. Statistics is the science of collecting, analyzing and understanding data and thereby permeates and aids all scientific disciplines. As such, statisticians are funded throughout the NSF. The Division of Mathematical Sciences in the MPS Directorate houses the core of statistics methodology research. The National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics – one of the 13 principal federal statistical agencies – is essential to assessing the vitality of the U.S. research and development enterprise and so is vital to informing U.S. competitiveness in today's ultra-competitive global market.

Lastly, I urge you to support the \$5 million proposed at NIST for Measurement Science and Standards in Support of Forensic Science. The 2009 National Academies report, *Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward*, documented substantial weaknesses in many of the forensic science disciplines. Despite the urgent calls for forensic science reform, little has been done since the 2009 report. \$5 million for improving the science in forensic science is an important first step to ensuring science best serves our justice system.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and Congressman Fattah, for the opportunity to present the American Statistical Association's views on funding for these important science and statistical agencies.