

American Statistical Association

Promoting the Practice and Profession of Statistics

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July 26, 2011

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives [personalized for each Member of Congress],

I am writing to address several aspects of the FY12 Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill that will soon be considered on the House floor. Specifically, I support the budgets for the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), and I respectfully request that the cuts to the budgets for the U.S. Census Bureau and Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) be reversed.

NSF funding supports the research that fuels American innovation, which, in turn, drives economic growth and job creation. Cuts to science research funding undermine America's future economic growth.

The economic statistical agencies (BEA, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Census Bureau) provide the data to help navigate economic recovery and the ultra-competitive global market. Cuts to these agencies would seriously impair our decisionmaking ability.

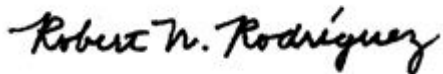
I understand the difficulty of the current fiscal environment, but cuts to the Census Bureau's budget will cost taxpayers billions of dollars in the long run, and in these times, it is even more imperative that taxpayer money be well directed. The Census Bureau has indicated the CJS bill mark for the Census Bureau—\$855 million, \$170 million below the FY12 request—would force abandonment of the economic census. This census is the foundation for our nation's economic measurements, including the Gross Domestic Product. Eliminating it would impede our ability to make informed economic policy decisions, an unwise move as we strive to recover from economic recession.

Planning for the 2020 Census is well under way at the Census Bureau, and Director Groves is committed to capping the cost of the 2020 Census for a housing unit at the 2010 level. The GAO concurs that the bureau's plans and innovations in technology and statistical techniques have the potential to save billions of dollars and improve accuracy. Furthermore, because census data guide more than half a trillion dollars in federal assistance, action that undermines such data could prevent assistance from reaching places where it would be most helpful.

The 22% cut to BJS will reverse the improvement to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) that Congress began funding in FY10. This additional funding was intended to reverse the decline in critical information needed by law enforcement officials and policymakers to aid public safety. Because BJS is the only reliable provider of nationally available data on crime and victimization, drastically cutting its budget by \$13 million will impair our ability to monitor crime in the United States.

While the ASA heartily supports the initiatives in the president's FY12 request for the Census Bureau, NSF, BEA, and BJS, we also understand the constraints of the CJS bill in Appropriations Committee deliberations. In subsequent deliberations, we hope the House will fund at least some of NSF's and BEA's initiatives and reverse the cuts to the Census Bureau and BJS budgets. Doing so will strengthen the U.S economy in the long run.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert N. Rodriguez". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert N. Rodriguez, PhD
2012 President, The American Statistical Association