

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 17, 2025

The Honorable Lori Chavez-DeRemer
Secretary
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20210

Mr. William Wiatrowski
Acting Commissioner
Bureau of Labor Statistics
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Secretary Chavez-DeRemer and Acting Commissioner Wiatrowski:

We write to seek information about the quality and quantity of core economic data prepared by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), which could be at risk following the longest government shutdown in U.S. history and given President Trump's unfounded attacks on the integrity of federal statistical agencies. We are concerned that recent developments, in addition to persistent data collection challenges and budgetary shortfalls, could affect access to information critical for understanding and responding to this Administration's failed economic policies.

BLS, an independent agency within the U.S. Department of Labor, plays an important role by publishing statistics that provide a complete and factual picture of the rapidly changing U.S. economy. Congress, the Executive Branch, and the Federal Reserve (Fed) all rely on timely, accurate, and granular economic data to make informed decisions that impact every corner of the country. Specifically, the Fed utilizes BLS data daily to monitor inflation measures, examine job growth trends, and analyze the U.S. economy.¹ The Fed leans on this data when setting interest rates and taking other actions consistent with its dual mandate. In addition, the private sector relies on BLS data to make investment, hiring, and pay decisions and as a benchmark for their own data.² Lastly, in order to maintain a robust U.S. Treasury market and the U.S. dollar as the world's primary reserve currency, it is essential that the rest of the world views U.S. economic statistics as intellectually robust and free from political influence.

Due to disruptions from the Republican-manufactured government shutdown, BLS confirmed that it will not publish the unemployment rate for October, marking the first omission in 77 years.³ This data gap leaves policymakers, businesses, homeowners, and the general public in the dark on the current state of the labor market and broader economy.

Furthermore, the level of participation in BLS' voluntary surveys has declined in recent years, partly due to difficulties reaching people and businesses via phone or in-person visits to collect this data.⁴ For example, response rates for BLS' employment establishment survey, which collects data from businesses and is a key component of the agency's monthly jobs report, averaged around 60% between 2009 and 2019, but have since

¹ Letter to BLS Survey Participants, 23 May 2024, <https://www.bls.gov/respondents/federal-reserve-endorsement.pdf>.

² "The private sector can't replace official statistics—but could be a great partner," 11 Aug. 2025, <https://www.piie.com/blogs/realtime-economics/2025/private-sector-cant-replace-official-statistics-could-be-great>.

³ "After Shutdown, Labor Dept. Says Some Data Is Gone for Good," 19 Nov. 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/19/business/economy/labor-department-economy-data-october.html>.

⁴ "Survey Response Rates Are Down Since Covid. That's Worrying for US Economic Data," 15 Feb. 2023, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-02-15/us-economic-data-threatened-by-survey-non-responses>.

declined to less than 45%.⁵ Furthermore, response rates for two BLS surveys of retail businesses and households, which form the basis for calculating the Consumer Price Index (CPI), a key indicator of inflation for consumer prices, have dropped significantly since 2014.⁶ Some have also attributed declining survey rates to an eroding trust in institutions and government. President Trump's baseless removal of Commissioner Erika McEntarfer further threatens to undermine the credibility of federal economic statistics, according to two former BLS commissioners appointed by presidents of both parties.⁷ More broadly, this trend means that incoming data may have become less accurate and subject to larger revisions, which can make it more difficult for policymakers to assess current economic conditions, according to Fed researchers.⁸

Under this Administration, declining response rates, increased data collection costs, and budget concerns have forced difficult decisions regarding survey sample sizes and the metrics that are gathered. In May, BLS announced that it will stop calculating and publishing 350 indexes, including those related to specific industries, that contribute to the Producer Price Index (PPI), a key indicator of inflation for producers of consumer goods.⁹ Then, in July, BLS announced that it had stopped gathering CPI data in three metro areas and reduced the sample size by 15% in the 72 other surveyed areas because current resources are insufficient.¹⁰ We are concerned that BLS is losing granularity in its inflation measures, which could make it more difficult to assess tariff-driven price increases across the country.

To address these issues, BLS can take steps to modernize its existing systems and data collection practices. For example, the Census Bureau, in collaboration with BLS, is currently testing the use of online self-response data collection for the Current Population Survey (CPS),¹¹ which serves as the primary source of labor statistics. BLS can also directly focus on hard-to-reach cases in its surveys, which could help improve response rates and reduce bias.¹² In addition, BLS can invest in innovation, incorporate digitized information into its statistical programs, and consider the use of large language models (LLMs) to make it easier for people to report their industries, occupations, and activities.¹³ Lastly, a bipartisan group of around 90 economists have suggested that BLS deepen its partnerships with the private sector and evaluate how private sector and administrative data can complement public statistics, while still preserving data integrity and privacy.¹⁴ We urge the Administration to grant BLS leadership flexibility to spend congressionally-appropriated funds in ways that prioritize these upgrades, partnerships, and its ability to hire, retain, and train talent.

⁵ "Do Low Survey Response Rates Threaten Data Dependence?" 31 Mar. 2025, <https://www.frbsf.org/research-and-insights/publications/economic-letter/2025/03/do-low-survey-response-rates-threaten-data-dependence/>.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ "Statement on Commissioner McEntarfer's Removal," 1 Aug. 2025, <https://www.friendsofbls.org/updates/2025/8/1/statement-on-commissioner-mcentarfers-removal>.

⁸ "Do Low Survey Response Rates Threaten Data Dependence?"

⁹ "BLS to Discontinue Selected PPIs," May 2025, <https://www.bls.gov/ppi/notices/2025/bls-to-discontinue-selected-ppis.htm>.

¹⁰ "Notice of CPI collection reductions," 16 Jun. 2025, <https://www.bls.gov/cpi/notices/2025/collection-reduction.htm>; "More information on CPI collection reductions," 29 Jul. 2025, <https://www.bls.gov/cpi/notices/2025/more-information-collection-reduction.htm>.

¹¹ "CPS Response Rates," https://www.bls.gov/cps/methods/response_rates.htm.

¹² Friends of BLS FY25 Recommendation, 1 May 2024, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bedb4a070e802cb58b90b79/t/66341299c989547c6cb2ae4c/1714688665226/Friends+of+BLS+FY25+Recommendation.pdf>.

¹³ "Former BLS commissioner says there are better ways to collect data for jobs reports," 8 Aug. 2025, <https://www.foxbusiness.com/economy/former-bls-commissioner-says-better-ways-collect-data-jobs-reports>.

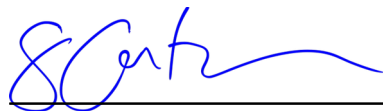
¹⁴ "Bipartisan Call to Strengthen America's Economic Statistical System," 29 Jul. 2025, <https://eig.org/bipartisan-call-to-strengthen-americas-economic-statistical-system/>.

We recognize the importance of ensuring the nonpartisan integrity of BLS. We have the shared goal of ensuring that U.S. economic data is accurate, credible, and—like the U.S. economy itself—remains the best in the world. To that end, we request that you respond to the following questions by no later than January 6, 2026.

1. When will the BLS publish the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for October?
2. Due to President Trump’s attacks, BLS has lost 12 of its 35 senior leaders in recent months.¹⁵ How does the Labor Department plan to address this loss of critical expertise and institutional knowledge?
3. At current budgetary levels, does BLS expect to scale back any existing programs over the next few months? Are any BLS programs being considered for elimination? If so, please list the affected programs.
4. Please provide an update on the timeline for the modernization of the Current Population Survey (CPS). Has BLS experienced any challenges in implementing these efforts?
5. Is BLS considering increasing or expanding existing programs by blending survey data with administrative data, including by leveraging information-sharing agreements with other state or federal agencies?
 - a. Are there any statutory limitations to improving coordination with other federal agencies, such as the Internal Revenue Service (IRS)?¹⁶
6. In 2022, BLS replaced the collection of new-vehicle prices with transaction data from private sector sources, though it took two years for staff to ensure it provided a reliable measure and to implement the change.¹⁷ Is BLS considering the use of private sector data for any other metrics?
 - a. If so, please provide information related to the specific BLS programs that would use these private sector data. How is BLS ensuring that BLS products remain accurate and nationally representative after incorporating private sector data?
 - b. Are there limitations on how economic data available from private sources can be adapted by BLS?
7. Is BLS taking steps to leverage automation and digitalization technologies to potentially improve how economic data are produced and shared?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Sean Casten
Member of Congress

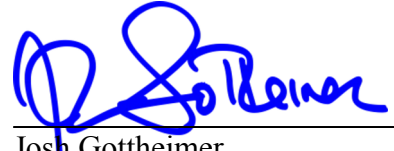
¹⁵ “Former heads of US Bureau of Labor Statistics say Trump’s attacks erode trust in data,” 8 Oct. 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/former-heads-us-bureau-labor-statistics-say-trumps-attacks-erode-trust-data-2025-10-08/>.

¹⁶ “Data Synchronization: The Time is Now,” June 2023, <https://www.aeaweb.org/content/file?id=18903>.

¹⁷ “BLS Faces a ‘Slow-Moving Train Wreck.’ There Are No Easy Fixes,” 6 Aug. 2025, <https://www.barrons.com/articles/bls-jobs-inflation-data-fixes-d84c0039>.



Cleo Fields
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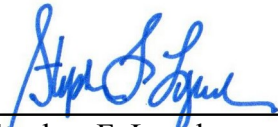
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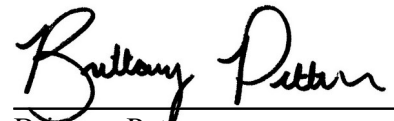
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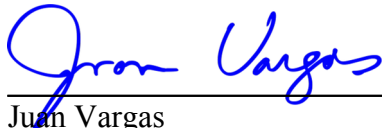
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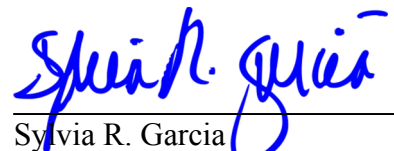
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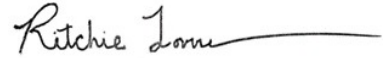
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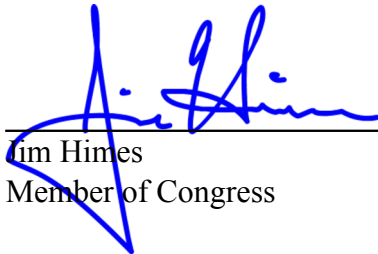
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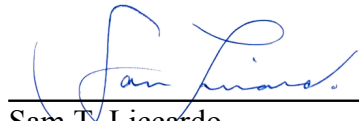
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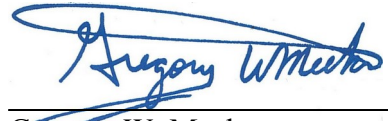
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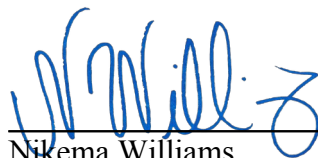
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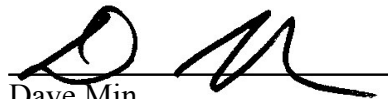
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