

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 22, 2025

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Dear Director Hassett, Director Vought, and Mr. Calabria:

In light of the Administration's numerous attacks on transparent economic data, we write with questions regarding the Administration's plans to implement changes to economic data collection, analyses, and reporting.

On Friday, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) announced that it would be delaying its release of the Consumer Expenditure Survey, an annual report that the agency describes as the only "federal household survey to provide information on the complete range of consumers' expenditures and incomes."<sup>1</sup> BLS provided an explanation for this delay only today and reported that they would be releasing the data on October 30, more than a month later than it was initially set to be published.<sup>2</sup> This is critical data; it is used by BLS to weight the monthly Consumer Price Index, adjusting how heavily different goods and services count in inflation measurements that inform Federal Reserve decisions on interest rates affecting every American's mortgage and savings.<sup>3</sup>

The news underscores how strained our federal statistical agencies have become. Rather than strengthening these agencies, the Trump Administration has spent the last eight months calling into question the integrity of U.S. economic data, while simultaneously undermining the tools in place to improve data accuracy and public trust.

Federal economic statistics serve as the bedrock of our economy. Companies rely on this information for hiring, expansion, and strategic planning decisions that drive job creation and

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<sup>1</sup> Axios, "Bureau of Labor Statistics postpones key data report," Courtenay Brown, September 19, 2025, <https://www.axios.com/2025/09/19/bls-cpi-report-inflation>.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Expenditure Surveys, "Consumer Expenditures 2024 News Release Rescheduled, September 22, 2025, <https://www.bls.gov/cex/notices/2025/ce-2024-reschedule.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Axios, "Bureau of Labor Statistics postpones key data report," Courtenay Brown, September 19, 2025, <https://www.axios.com/2025/09/19/bls-cpi-report-inflation>; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Federal Reserve Endorsement," May 23, 2024, <https://www.bls.gov/respondents/federal-reserve-endorsement.pdf>.

economic growth.<sup>4</sup> Government programs use economic data for distributing federal assistance and Social Security payments affecting more than 70 million Americans.<sup>5</sup> Financial markets depend on this data, which “underpins the pricing for trillions of dollars in assets globally,”<sup>6</sup> and the Federal Reserve uses the data to inform monetary policy decisions that affect every American’s economic well-being.<sup>7</sup> The data is also critical to our international credibility, as foreign investors hold one-third of all U.S. Treasuries.<sup>8</sup> Any erosion of confidence in the federal government’s data threatens to destabilize markets, reduce investment, and undermine America’s economic leadership globally.

On August 1, after the July 2025 Employment Situation report showed that 258,000 fewer jobs were added to the U.S. economy in prior months than initially reported, President Trump made the unprecedented decision to fire the BLS Commissioner, Dr. Erika McEntarfer. The President accused Commissioner McEntarfer of “rigging” and “faking” the data and announced her termination via social media.<sup>9</sup> These allegations were made without any supporting evidence and disregarded expert consensus that Commissioner McEntarfer – who was confirmed by an overwhelming bipartisan Senate vote, including support from Vice President Vance<sup>10</sup> – had no opportunity to manipulate the data.<sup>11</sup> President Trump’s decision to fire Commissioner McEntarfer represents a departure from over a century of statistical independence and has alarmed economists and former BLS Commissioners from both parties, who warn that it threatens public trust and the quality of data that is essential for public and private sector decision-making.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The Hamilton Project and American Enterprise Institute, “In order that they might rest their arguments on facts: The vital role of government-collected data,” Nicholas Eberstadt, Ryan Nunn, Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach, and Michael Strain, March 2, 2017, <https://www.hamiltonproject.org/publication/economic-fact/in-order-that-they-might-rest-their-arguments-on-facts-the-vital-role-of-government-collected-data/>.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, “Uses of Decennial Census Programs Data in Federal Funds Distribution: Fiscal Year 2021,” Ceci A. Villa Ross, June 2023, p. 7, <https://www2.census.gov/library/working-papers/2023/decennial/census-data-federal-funds-fy-2021.pdf>; Marketplace, “Measuring the ROI of the CPI,” Maria Hollenhorst, September 9, 2025, <https://www.marketplace.org/story/2025/09/09/how-does-the-government-use-cpi-data>; U.S. Social Security Administration, Research, Statistics & Policy Analysis, “Monthly Statistical Snapshot, August 2025,” September 2025, [https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/quickfacts/stat\\_snapshot/](https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/quickfacts/stat_snapshot/).

<sup>6</sup> Financial Times, “Fired BLS chief calls Donald Trump’s attack on US data agency a ‘dangerous step’,” Clair Jones, September 16, 2025, <https://www.ft.com/content/dc6be071-ebd5-4b73-82a0-62435cedea26>.

<sup>7</sup> The Hamilton Project, “In order that they might rest their arguments on facts: The vital role of government-collected data,” Nicholas Eberstadt, Ryan Nunn, Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach, and Michael Strain, March 2, 2017, <https://www.hamiltonproject.org/publication/economic-fact/in-order-that-they-might-rest-their-arguments-on-facts-the-vital-role-of-government-collected-data/>.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of the Treasury, Federal Reserve Bank of New York, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, “Foreign Portfolio Holdings of U.S. Securities (As of June 28, 2024),” April 2025, p. 2, <https://ticdata.treasury.gov/resource-center/data-chart-center/tic/Documents/shl2024r.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> AP News, “Trump removes official overseeing jobs data after dismal employment report,” Christopher Rugaber and Josh Boak, August 1 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/trump-jobs-firing-f00e9bf96d0110519be9bf4f3ec89195>; Truth Social Post by President Donald J. Trump, @realDonaldTrump, August 1, 2025, <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/114954846612623858>.

<sup>10</sup> Senate Confirmation of Erika L. McEntarfer, of the District of Columbia, to be Commissioner of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor, for a term of four years, Presidential Nomination 837, <https://www.congress.gov/nomination/118th-congress/837>.

<sup>11</sup> BBC, “Why were US job numbers which riled Trump revised down by so much?,” Natalie Sherman and Jake Horton, August 4, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c9wyp2kk1e5o>.

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., The Friends of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Statement on Commissioner McEntarfer’s Removal,” August 1, 2025, <https://www.friendsofbls.org/updates/2025/8/1/statement-on-commissioner-mcentarfes-removal>.

Since then, the Administration has intensified their assault on data integrity. On September 5, ahead of the last monthly jobs report, President Trump told reporters that “[t]he real number that [he’s] talking about... will be in a year from now,”<sup>13</sup> suggesting that monthly releases on unemployment data in the forthcoming year would not be accurate. That same day, Commerce Secretary Lutnick said on CNBC that BLS employment data will “get better” once you “take out the people who are just trying to create noise against the president.” implying that jobs data is somehow political.<sup>14</sup> On September 9, when the BLS published its preliminary benchmark revisions – a standard, annual process – Secretary of Labor Chavez-Deremer undermined them, stating that the revisions “giv[e] the American people even more reason to doubt the integrity of the data being published by the BLS.”<sup>15</sup> This list could go on as several Administration officials, including Treasury Secretary Bessent, Director of the National Economic Council Kevin Hassett, and Council of Economic Advisers Chair and Federal Reserve Governor Stephen Miran, have expressed similar sentiments encouraging distrust in economic data.

There is no evidence supporting the Administration’s allegations of political manipulation. The monthly jobs report is compiled by career statisticians using standardized protocols, and the commissioner is uninvolved in drafting estimates or revisions.<sup>16</sup> Revisions are routine due to the survey methodology used to calculate the monthly estimates, and similar revisions have occurred under multiple administrations.<sup>17</sup> While initial survey response rates have declined from roughly 60% to 45% in recent years due to disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic, data revisions since 2022 remain consistent with historical norms, demonstrating that statistical processes have remained robust despite operational constraints.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, response rates in recent months have not been out of the ordinary compared to post-pandemic trends.<sup>19</sup>

BLS and other statistical agencies – including the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) and the Census Bureau – have a responsibility to strengthen data collection processes, but have been strained by chronic resource shortfalls.<sup>20</sup> Budget growth has not kept pace with rising operational costs, forcing these agencies to contend with aging technology.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, staffing shortages stemming from Trump’s federal hiring freeze have impaired the agencies’ data collection

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<sup>13</sup> PBS News, “U.S. hiring stalls with just 22,000 jobs added in August,” Paul Wiseman, September 5, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/economy/u-s-hiring-stalls-with-just-22000-jobs-added-in-august>.

<sup>14</sup> CNBC, “Job reports will get more accurate, Lutnick predicts before BLS reveals sluggish August hiring,” Kevin Breuninger, September 5, 2025, <https://www.cnbc.com/2025/09/05/trump-bls-jobs-lutnick.html>.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, “Secretary Chavez-Deremer Statement on BLS Preliminary Benchmark Revision,” press release, September 9, 2025, <https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/osec/osec20250909>.

<sup>16</sup> NBC News, “Jobs data revisions are common. Here’s how the process works,” Steve Kopack, August 4, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/business/economy/bls-data-explainer-what-to-know-rcna222570>.

<sup>17</sup> BBC, “Why were US job numbers which riled Trump revised down by so much?,” Natalie Sherman and Jake Horton, August 4, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c9wyp2kk1e5o>.

<sup>18</sup> Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, “Do Low Survey Response Rates Threaten Data Dependence?” Sylvain Leduc, Luiz Edgard Oliveira, and Caroline Paulson, March 31, 2025, <https://www.frbsf.org/research-and-insights/publications/economic-letter/2025/03/do-low-survey-response-rates-threaten-data-dependence/>.

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Survey Methods Research “Establishment surveys unit response rates, April 2015–April 2025,” <https://www.bls.gov/osmr/response-rates/establishment-survey-response-rates.htm>.

<sup>20</sup> The Wall Street Journal, “Real Strains Inside the BLS Made It Vulnerable to Trump’s Accusations,” Matt Grossman, August 4, 2025, <https://www.wsj.com/economy/real-strains-inside-the-bls-made-it-vulnerable-to-trumps-accusations-52857f36>.

processes, including for inflation measurement.<sup>22</sup> The Administration has also eliminated economic advisory committees that help BLS and BEA adapt statistical methods to economic changes – an action that counteracts the kind of modernization for which National Economic Council Director Kevin Hassett recently advocated to improve data quality.<sup>23</sup> If the Administration is serious about improving the quality of economic data, they should ensure that federal statistics agencies have the appropriate resources to modernize statistical methods and increase survey response rates.

Businesses, families, and investors all rely on the federal government’s high quality economic data to make decisions that are critical to our economic security and financial stability. Any attempts by the Trump Administration to distort it will have serious consequences for every American.

In an effort to understand the scope of your role and responsibility for improving data quality and public trust in federal economic data, please provide written responses by October 6, 2025 to the following questions:

1. On September 5, ahead of the last monthly jobs report, President Trump told reporters that “the real number that [he’s] talking about...will be in a year from now,” implying that jobs data published for the next year will be inaccurate. Do you agree with the implications of this statement? Whether you agree or disagree, provide recommendations for how policymakers, businesses, and global investors should interpret economic data between now and “a year from now.”
2. Which individuals at BLS made the decision to postpone the release of the annual Consumer Expenditure Survey?
  - a. Was any other Trump Administration official – at the White House or elsewhere – involved in the BLS’ decision to delay the release?
  - b. How will the postponement affect the reliability of CPI data and other economic data that rely on the Consumer Expenditure Survey?
3. How will the Administration ensure federal statistical agencies receive adequate resources for modernization and accurate data collection?

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<sup>21</sup> The Friends of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, FY26 Appropriations Request for BLS, May 7, 2025, <https://www.friendsofbls.org/updates/2025/5/7/fy-2026-appropriations-request-for-bls>.

<sup>22</sup> The Wall Street Journal, “Real Strains Inside the BLS Made It Vulnerable to Trump’s Accusations,” Matt Grossman, August 4, 2025, <https://www.wsj.com/economy/real-strains-inside-the-bls-made-it-vulnerable-to-trumps-accusations-52857f36>; Reuters, “US Labor Department reducing CPI collection sample amid hiring freeze,” June 4, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/business/us-inflation-data-collection-hurt-by-trump-era-hiring-freeze-wsj-says-2025-06-04>.

<sup>23</sup> Politico, “‘Bad sign’: Purge of data experts raises alarms over economic reports,” Sam Sutton, March 21, 2025, <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/03/21/labor-commerce-department-economy-data-doge-00241559>; Marketplace, “Experts worry about degradation of economic data after advisory committees disbanded,” Caleigh Wells, March 5, 2025, <https://www.marketplace.org/story/2025/03/05/advisory-committees-economic-data-commerce-department-bureau-of-labor-statistics>; The Wall Street Journal, “Trump Seeks Bigger Overhaul at Labor Statistics Bureau, Adviser Says,” Brian Schwartz, August 3, 2025, <https://www.wsj.com/economy/jobs/trump-seeks-bigger-overhaul-at-labor-statistics-bureau-adviser-says-dc109bac>.

4. What steps will be taken to ensure public confidence in federal economic statistics?
5. Will the Administration commit to not interfering with economic data? Specifically, will you confirm that political appointees will not alter, adjust, or manipulate statistics, and will leave data collection to nonpartisan statistical experts?
6. How does the Administration plan to address survey response rate challenges without undermining data quality?

The integrity of America's economic data is fundamental to our economic prosperity and global leadership – it is not a partisan issue. We urge immediate action to address these concerns and protect the statistical infrastructure that underpins our economy.

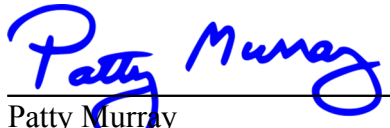
Sincerely,



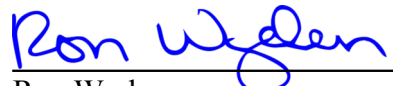
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Ranking Member  
Committee on Banking,  
Housing, and Urban Affairs



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



Patty Murray  
United States Senator



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Jack Reed  
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator



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Tina Smith  
United States Senator



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Andy Kim  
United States Senator



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Ruben Gallego  
United States Senator



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Angela D. Alsobrooks  
United States Senator