



AMERICAN STATISTICAL ASSOCIATION

Promoting the Practice and Profession of Statistics®

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September 2, 2016

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy
and Water Development
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy
and Water Development
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Simpson
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy
and Water Development
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Marcy Kaptur
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy
and Water Development
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Feinstein, Chairman Simpson, and Ranking Member Kaptur,

As president of the American Statistical Association, I write in support of the fiscal year 2017 (FY17) budget for the Energy Information Administration (EIA). I appreciate the FY17 levels provided by your committees for the EIA and respectfully ask consideration of funding their proposed FY17 initiatives should additional funds be available. I recognize that difficult decisions must be made in the current environment and emphasize the importance of EIA data to our economy and security.

Energy issues are integrally tied to our economy and national security. Hundreds of billions of dollars ride on energy markets; investments in energy production and conservation; and investments in energy-consuming equipment, appliances, and vehicles. Our reliance on energy imports and the volatile nature of the global energy market make energy a security issue.

At every turn, the EIA is the principal source of objective information to help us understand our needs and risks and guide our decisions. Policymakers, businesses, and regulators rely upon the EIA for data concerning domestic and global energy reserves, energy production, energy consumption, and energy efficiency. The EIA has also been a leader in making their data accessible to the public, including through innovative graphical displays exemplified by their new U.S. Energy Data Mapping System (<http://www.eia.gov/state/maps.cfm>).

Given the importance of EIA data to our economy and security, I believe the funding of FY17 initiatives will pay for itself in many ways. First, I point out another indicator of EIA's importance, its broad data user community enumerated in the FY17 congressional justification: 17% private citizen, 21% finance/consulting, 24% energy sector, 20% business industry, 8% education, 7% government, and 2% media. I also point out that EIA is often praised for its work, including this piece with the telling heading "Your tax dollars hard at work," about EIA's new data portals: <https://energyathaas.wordpress.com/2014/04/27/your-tax-dollars-hard-at-work-eias-new-data-portals/>.

The FY17 initiatives would allow EIA to expand in four important areas: (i) revamp its petroleum data and analysis to provide more regional detail to better address many policymaker questions and market issues; (ii) expand its commercial building survey work to enhance energy efficiency data; (iii) better understand domestic energy markets in the context of the world energy system and, in particular, export scenarios for crude oil, petroleum products, and liquefied natural gas. This effort also aims to standardize product definitions and classifications with those of Canada and Mexico and to improve market transparency of North American infrastructure and current energy flows. (iv) collect and analyze data on personal vehicle transportation to develop projections of motor fuel demand, to inform policymakers who assess, plan, and fund energy infrastructure needs.

In my opinion, EIA data should be viewed as a form of business intelligence that informs national policies. We must support that intelligence given that its strategic importance and economic value is so critical to our decision-making in recovering from economic recession and navigating the world energy conditions.

Again, I understand the current federal budget environment calls for painful choices and thank you for your support of EIA in FY17 and previous years. Considering the value of reliable energy data, I also respectfully request you to consider funding some of EIA's FY17 proposed initiatives.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Jessica Utts". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jessica" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Utts".

Jessica Utts
President, American Statistical Association