

**Statement of William Warren Beach**  
**Nominee for Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics**  
**Before the Committee on Health, Education and Labor Policy**

**December 5, 2017**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Murray, and Members of this Committee.

Let me join all of the nominees who have come before you in thanking this Committee for inviting me here today. I am honored that the President nominated me for this position of public trust. I thank the President for the nomination and Secretary Alexander Acosta for his recommendation and support.

I admire, as all of you do, the Bureau of Labor Statistics; and I join you in the common cause of advancing its independence and integrity.

BLS continues to be the pre-eminent source for workforce, price, and productivity data. Much of the private and public sectors require this information to function well, if to function at all. Markets trade on BLS information, policy makers changes laws based on their data, and businesses arrive at crucial decisions using the statistical products that BLS produces.

How would I approach the position, should I be confirmed? I come to this nomination with a long public record of policy research. Underlying this record are principles that have guided my career. These principles, I submit, are more important and relevant to the position to which I'm nominated than most of the essays and projects that bear my name.

I can state these principles in the form of three commitments:

- Commitment to discovering and developing high quality data to understand better the economic and social world.
- Commitment to building innovative statistical and model-based tools that advance our understanding of how public policy affects social and economic activity.
- Commitment to defending our public data systems through objective analysis and transparency.

First, I maintain a commitment to discovering and developing high quality data. As everyone here knows, the economic and social world does not deliver a package of data to us each day with a note, "here's everything you're going to need today to understand what's going on." Rather, we have to work hard to find the right and reliable data for making sense out of what would otherwise be a chaos of seeming incomprehensible activities.

I have argued many times that the National Income and Product Accounts and the labor and price databases of the Bureau of Labor Statistics rank among the 20<sup>th</sup> Century's greatest inventions. Together they constitute our national economic accounting system, a true national treasure, and they reliably provide invaluable information to private and public decision makers struggling to draw insights from social and economic activity.

Note, however, that this accounting system is entirely an invention of the human mind. None of this exists on its own in nature. Economists, statisticians, sociologists, and other professionals had to discover data, defend their insights in a ruthless process of peer review, and find funding to sustain what they had discovered.

Second, I maintain a commitment to building analytical tools that will give policy makers better and timelier insights on how policy change might affect economic activity. Data alone tells us little about economic and social relationships. For example, the Census Bureau produces amazing data on the dynamics of business formation: creation and closing of businesses and the jobs created or lost in those businesses. However, the information collected does not tell us how business and job change rates affect government revenues, the output of the economy, or the productivity of labor. These relationships can best be captured in simple or sometimes complex models of economic activity based on sound economic and social theory.

Finally, I am committed to defending our public data systems. For the handful of people who have followed my work on public data, I am hopefully known for advancing tough standards of transparency, disclosure, and non-partisanship. For example, I began work on public disclosure of federal outlays and grants years before Senators Obama and Coburn led the successful effort to create USASpending.gov. I supported non-partisan efforts for passage of the Data Act, and, when I served on the Republican Staff of the Senate Budget Committee, I worked with Senator Murray's office to advance the Evidence-Based Policymaking Commission Act of 2015. I have even flustered successive directors of the Congressional Budget Office by my critique of their failure to disclose their work adequately.

If confirmed, I will work hard to advance the integrity of the Bureau, continue its legacy as a pre-eminent source for public data, and maintain the neutrality and objectivity that is indispensable to our nation's growing economy.

I thank you, again, for the opportunity to appear before you and to briefly describe the commitments that would guide my tenure as Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

I look forward to answering your questions.