

Data Coalition Obtains Documents Indicating Labor Department is Constraining Resources for Evaluating Program Effectiveness

Washington, D.C.— The Data Coalition [acquired documents](#) through a Freedom of Information Act request that suggest the U.S. Labor Department continues to suppress resources for studying whether and how well the country’s labor policies work.

The documents provided to the Data Coalition were originally submitted by the Labor Department to Congress. They show that after resources for evaluation were quietly [cut in 2018](#), the department continued to underfund evaluation activities relative to historic norms. Last year, the department transferred \$2 million to the agency chief evaluation officer and in 2019 that amount was increased to \$3 million. Historically the agency prioritized resources for evaluation, up to \$27 million annually.

“The Labor Department’s continued underfunding of evaluation activities is extremely disappointing. Congress provided the Labor Department with the ability to allocate substantial resources to study what works in advancing employment opportunities and job training across the country. The department’s reluctance to fully use this capability will have long-term consequences for policymakers’ access to reliable information on important and costly national programs,” said **Nick Hart, CEO of the Data Coalition**. “The Data Coalition calls on the Labor Department’s new leadership and the Trump Administration to fully support implementation of the bipartisan Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act. Prioritizing resources for implementing this new law will ensure the agency is responsibly using data to study the programs funded in the department’s \$12 billion annual budget.”

In early 2019, the president signed the [Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act](#) (P.L. 115-435), which directs federal departments to establish evaluation officers and produce annual evaluation plans, with the intent of encouraging federal agencies to use data for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of government policies. That bipartisan law was based on unanimous recommendations from the U.S. Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking, which featured the Labor Department’s chief evaluation office and staff as a model for other agencies to emulate.

The annual appropriations bills authorize the Labor Department to allocate more than \$75 million from certain programs in the department to support evaluation activities. The department has never used the full amount authorized by law for evaluation, the last two years have been the lowest since the authority was added by Congress.

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