

# Congress of the United States

JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE  
(CREATED PURSUANT TO SEC. 5(a) OF PUBLIC LAW 304, 79TH CONGRESS)

Washington, DC 20510-6602

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney  
Director  
Office of Management and Budget  
725 17th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Mulvaney:

I write today to encourage the Trump Administration to conduct the Contingent Worker Survey (CWS) as a supplement to the May 2017 Current Population Survey (CPS) and to repeat the CWS every two years so that we can continue to gather data as our workforce is continually changing. The CWS would provide policymakers with important data about the size and characteristics of the contingent workforce as well as its access to benefits and basic labor protections.


Contingent workers—temporary workers who are hired on a per project basis, including freelancers, independent contractors, and certain types of consultants—have played an important role in our economy for decades. The advent of the internet and app-based platforms such as Uber and TaskRabbit has increased the visibility of, and access to, contingent work.

This “on-demand” and “gig” economy presents interesting ways to leverage new technologies and potentially better align work with the demands of a cyclical and global marketplace. Yet, contingent workers also face unique challenges that could leave them vulnerable. A Government Accountability Office study found that contingent workers face more job instability, receive fewer worker protections and benefits such as health insurance and a retirement plan, have lower earnings, and are more likely to have to rely on public assistance.<sup>i</sup>

BLS has answered researchers’ call for more recent data by proposing to reinstate the CWS as a supplement to the May 2017 CPS. The CWS was designed as a supplemental survey to provide precisely the type of information needed to answer relevant policy questions surrounding the state of contingent work. However, the CWS has not been conducted since 2005—well before many of the new technologies that have given rise to the visibility of contingent workers existed.

Finally, it is important to once again note the key role that our statistical agencies play. As stated in the March 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to you that I cosigned, data provided by the BLS and other statistical agencies are essential to the development of policies that affect American workers, and to the understanding of the economic health and security of the country.<sup>ii</sup> I ask for your commitment that the BLS will continue to be able to do its job of informing the nation of where our country stands and providing policymakers and researchers with highly relevant data without delay or interference.

Sincerely,



Senator Martin Heinrich  
Ranking Member  
Joint Economic Committee

<sup>i</sup> Government Accountability Office, “Contingent Workforce: Size, Characteristics, Earnings, and Benefits,” May 20, 2015.

<sup>ii</sup> Joint Economic Committee, “Sen. Heinrich, Committee Leaders, Call on Trump Administration to Stand by the Independence and Integrity of the Bureau of Labor Statistics,” March 2, 2017.