

Petition to Save the BLS International Labor Comparisons Program
www.ipetitions.com/petition/saveilc

April 12, 2010

The Honorable Dave Obey
Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
2441 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Obey, Chairman Harkin, Ranking Member Tiahrt and Ranking Member Cochran:

The International Comparisons (ILC) program of the Bureau of Labor Statistics is proposed for elimination in the President's FY-2011 budget. We believe that this is a grave mistake, and we have sponsored a petition to urge the Congress to fund this widely used and vital program. For just \$2 million annually, this unique ILC program produces timely, trustworthy international comparisons that permit valid assessments of the competitive position of the United States in the global economy. A number of key professionals from the academic, labor, business, research, and government communities greatly value the work of ILC and have rallied to its support.

We would like to highlight several excerpts from the many comments received from supporters of this program (number in the attached petition noted):

13 – University of Pennsylvania, the Wharton School: “The international data compiled by the BLS is absolutely vital for any serious analysis of U.S. competitiveness compared to that of the other leading economies. This service must be retained.”

15 – Youngstown State University, Center for Working-Class Studies: “This is the most important data set for comparative labor costs that we have and is especially important in assessing labor costs in manufacturing.”

53 – Manpower Inc: “International labor data comparisons are critical to our business which is staffing, human resources and employment. We operate more than 4,000 offices in more than 80 countries throughout the world. We are headquartered here in the United States, and are a Fortune 500 Company ...with annual sales in excess of \$16 billion.”

84 – Director of Research and Education, Transport Workers Union: “I would consider this decision a terrible loss for our ability to understand globalization and its effect on American Workers.”

100 – Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) official: “The ILC has consistently served as an exemplar of rigor in assuring that the data they produce is suitable for making international comparisons and meticulously documented. ...The relatively small budget savings associated with closing ILC would come at a high cost in lost knowledge that is important for understanding labor market performance in an increasingly globalized world.”

157 – Upjohn Institute for Employment Research: “The BLS International Labor Comparisons program provides the only systematic data comparing labor costs in the United States with major trading partners, including China and Mexico. As the volume of trade expands, particularly with developing countries, having reliable information on the competitiveness of our workers with those overseas is more important than ever before.”

191 – U.S. Department of Commerce: “These data are very important to us in the International Trade Administration for the purpose of assessing U.S. competitiveness.”

We enclose the following documents for your information:

1. Petition: Save the BLS International Labor Comparisons Program, with the names, States, affiliations, and comments of those who signed.
2. A letter from three manufacturing organizations addressed to Secretary Solis and OMB Director Orszag in support of the ILC program.

To preserve these widely used and indispensable comparisons in our increasingly global economy, we and the over 200 signers of the petition urge you to restore \$2 million to the Fiscal Year 2011 BLS budget to fund the International Labor Comparisons program.

Sincerely yours,



Robert Bednarzik, Ph. D.
Georgetown University
Public Policy Institute
202-687-6901



Edwin R. Dean, Ph. D.
Former Associate Commissioner,
Bureau of Labor Statistics
703-836-7690

Enclosures

cc:

Members of Senate and House Appropriations Committees on Labor, HHS, Education, and Related agencies
The Honorable Hilda Solis, Secretary of Labor
The Honorable Keith Hall, Commissioner of Labor Statistics