



June 17, 2026

APC, APDU, COPAFS, ICPSR, and PAA Statement on Commerce’s Disclosure Avoidance for Statistical Products

On June 4, 2026 the Department of Commerce issued a new order [“Disclosure Avoidance for Statistical Products” \(DAO 216-26\)](#) that limits the types of privacy protection methods that the Census Bureau and Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) can use for their data products.

This order subverts processes developed over decades to foster transparency and public trust and creates a scenario in which **there will either be less privacy for our personal information, or less usable data, or both.**

This order raises several concerns:

Lack of Transparency Undermines Integrity

Federal law and policy provide guardrails by which statistical agencies work on behalf of the American people. As a result, agencies use established methods and processes to produce accurate information that respects individual privacy and protects confidentiality.

Specifically, there were robust processes in place to update and refine privacy methods, based on federal expertise, with oversight from external watchdogs, and bolstered by multiple opportunities for public review and input. This order circumvents both the expertise and transparency that the public deserves, and undermines the integrity of well-established processes.

Moreover, this order is in conflict with the Executive Order on [Restoring Gold Standard Science](#), which requires federal government scientific endeavors to be, among other

things, transparent, collaborative and interdisciplinary, subject to unbiased peer review, and without conflicts of interest.

Privacy, Confidentiality, and Data Quality Are at Risk

Limiting the Census Bureau and BEA to two of the oldest methods of privacy protection (rather than the full arsenal of other privacy-enhancing technologies that account for the rapidly evolving threats to privacy posed by modern computing and AI) will make it more difficult for these agencies to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of the sensitive data they hold on each and every person, household, and business in the U.S.

By limiting the Census Bureau and BEA to only two methods of privacy protection, the order also curtails the agencies' ability to produce detailed, decision-level information. The rule limits the agencies to "coarsening" (rounding, aggregating, and reporting in ranges) or suppression (not reporting). In other words, the now-mandated way to protect privacy and confidentiality is to reduce the amount of information that's published. This is particularly concerning for information we've come to rely on for neighborhoods and rural communities which are at most risk of being aggregated or suppressed.

Moreover, while the order is clear that standard methods are banned, parts of the order are vague and are causing widespread confusion. We know, for example, that widely-used products like Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics are affected, which means that crucial information for workforce development, veteran outreach, and transportation planning is at risk. However, the text of the order is so vague that the full scope of products affected is unclear. And we do not know how the order will be carried out. Will county data products now only be released at the state level? Will products be suspended completely? Will detail continue to be published, but put our privacy at risk?

A Ban Is a Bad Idea

What we do know is that the result of this ill-conceived order will be either [less privacy for our personal information, or less usable data, or both](#).

Narrowing the scope of the order so that it affects just a few products also does not solve the problem. **No decisions about our privacy should be made behind closed doors, without expert input, and without public input.**

Moreover, this order attempts to "solve" a problem that already had a solution. The Office of Management and Budget's 2025 [Open Data Guidance](#) already provides specifics on [how agencies can and should balance the tensions between privacy and accuracy in data products](#). In an age of rapidly advancing technologies, constraining agencies' abilities to react in kind to such developments represents a hamstringing of capabilities resulting in an unnecessary restriction on the types of data available for evidence-based decision-making.

The American people deserve accountability, transparency, and decisions made based on expertise not politics.

What should happen next?

Ideally, the order should be rescinded. In the absence of a retraction, the Department of Commerce, the Census Bureau, and BEA should publish an implementation plan in the Federal Register and request information from the public before making changes to any data products.

What can you do?

Contact your rep.

We urge you to contact your representatives in Congress, regardless of their party affiliation, and let them know your concerns. Calling is most effective and takes just two minutes of your time.

You can find contact information here:

<https://www.congress.gov/members/find-your-member>

Please share.

Please also share this statement and call to action with others who may be impacted, particularly those who may not yet understand the magnitude of what has occurred.