



The Demise and (Hopeful) Rise of the Economic Research Service

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What is the Economic Research Service (ERS) ?

- ❖ **The policy analytical and economic research arm of the Department of Agriculture (USDA)**
- ❖ **One of the 13 designated Official Statistical Agencies of the U.S.**

Major ERS Programs

- ❖ **Commodity, Farm, and Trade Economics**
- ❖ **Farm and Household Income (ARMS data)**
- ❖ **Food Markets, Food Safety, Nutrition Assistance Programs (FoodAps survey; Admin. Data)**
- ❖ **Natural Resources and Agrienvironmental Quality**
- ❖ **Rural Economy and Development, Intersectoral Dynamics**

Examples of ERS Audiences

- ❖ **International Trade Negotiators**
- ❖ **Natural Resource Program Designers and Policy Decision Makers**
- ❖ **Administrators of National Food Assistance Programs (e.g., SNAP, WIC, School Lunch)**
- ❖ **Rural County Governments**
- ❖ **U.S. Congressional Decision Makers**

ERS, 2018-2020

Suggestions of ERS Politicization

- ❖ **The President's Budget Proposals**

- ❖ *President's Proposed year-over-year budget cuts of 11.6% in 2018; 48% in 2019; 26.8% in 2020. (Though Congressional appropriations over-ruled the cuts)*

- ❖ **Relocation: In August 2018, Secretary announced that a portion of ERS would be moved to a location outside of the DC Metropolitan Area**

- ❖ **Choice of Kansas City made in July 2019; Employees given 9 mos. to decide whether to move or resign.**

Consequences of Announcement of Relocation and Actual Relocation

- ❖ **Reduced Staff Levels**
- ❖ **Particularly high loss of managerial and supervisory expertise**
- ❖ **Loss of Productivity**
 - ❖ *Fewer reports in an absolute sense*
 - ❖ *Fewer reports on a per capita basis*
- ❖ **Shift in relative subject matter of research reported**
- ❖ **Loss of gender diversity & diversity of experience**

The Future of ERS

- ❖ **Looks bright due to:**

- ❖ ***Selection of an ERS Administrator***

- ❖ ***A data and research supportive Biden/Harris Administration***

- ❖ **But...**

- ❖ ***It is likely to take years and great wisdom to rebuild ERS capacity as well as its reputation among a variety of stakeholder groups***