



JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE
SENATOR CHARLES E. SCHUMER
CHAIRMAN



February 20, 2008

Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Gutierrez:

I was deeply concerned to learn of the Department of Commerce's decision to shut down free public access to its Economic Indicators website as of March 1, 2008.

As you know, the Economic Indicators website, administered by the Department's Economic and Statistics Administration, compiles critical information about the state of the U.S. economy, ranging from GDP statistics to information about retail sales to Census Bureau information. Economic Indicators is particularly valuable because people can sign up to receive e-mail announcements as soon as new economic data across government agencies becomes available. Data compiled through Economic Indicators is so comprehensive that Forbes Magazine recently recognized the site with its "Best of the Web" award stating that trying to compile the type of information provided on this site by yourself "is an exercise in futility".

Given the current state of the U.S. economy, public access to information about the health of the economy has never been more critical. As important economic policy decisions are being made that will certainly have a lasting impact on this country's well being, easy and free access to Economic Indicators is essential to ensure a robust dialogue about the wisdom of particular policies. Shutting down this website will significantly increase the cost of getting this economic data; and it will effectively limit the public's ability to remain informed.

I was further troubled to learn that after this website has been shut down, members of the public may still receive e-mails with compilations of this type of data for a fee. Provision of accurate, easily accessible information about the state of the U.S. economy is one of the most basic government functions, and I find it appalling that taxpayers will now have to pay for data that the federal government already collects and compiles.

I find it hard to believe that shutting down this important information portal will result in any significant savings to the Department. Since the fixed costs of website creation have been paid, the operational costs of maintaining such a site must be relatively small. Can you please provide me with the cost of maintaining this site, as well as the cost-savings expected as a result of shutting it down? Additionally, I would like to know the number

of e-mail subscribers who will no longer have free access to email updates as a result of shutting down this portal. I would appreciate a response within two weeks of receipt of this letter.

I strongly urge the Department to reconsider its decision to terminate the Economic Indicators website. The information previously provided through the site is a public good and must be made widely available to all Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chuck Schumer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Chuck" is written with a large, prominent "C" and the last name "Schumer" follows in a similar cursive script.

Charles E. Schumer