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Opening Statement Ranking Member Elijah E. Cummings

Hearing on “Addressing Concerns About the Integrity of the U.S. Department of Labor’s Jobs Reporting”

June 6, 2012

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding today’s hearing, which appears to focus on two very different topics involving the Department of Labor and the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The first topic is “the integrity of DOL’s jobs reporting.” The Department of Labor strikes a balance between preventing the unauthorized release of key economic data and providing journalists with access to that data ahead of time so they can prepare their stories with context about the broader employment situation.

This balance is important. The media are the public’s eyes and ears, so it is critical that they have the access necessary to ensure that they have a thorough and accurate understanding so they can place it in context.

A leak of this data could have negative consequences. For example, in the hands of certain traders, early access to this data—even if just by a few seconds—could allow their powerful computer trading algorithms to manipulate markets and reap millions of dollars.

That is why the Department and other data reporting agencies employ procedures to prevent unauthorized releases.

Recently, the Department of Labor hired Sandia National Laboratories—which oversees the security of our nuclear arsenal—to evaluate whether changes were needed to meet the new security requirements of today’s constantly changing technological environment.

Sandia found significant vulnerabilities in the Department’s procedures and recommended steps to mitigate those risks. Sandia also warned that those seeking to break current security controls are “profit-driven, technically sophisticated individuals or organizations who may have considerable resources at their disposal.”

Acting on Sandia’s recommendations, the Department announced new controls on hardware and software in the lock-up environment. In addition, the Department has now

excluded specific firms that sought access to sell data to Wall Street traders a fraction of a second before other traders see it.

Initially, some in the media complained that the Department's proposed changes were too restrictive, and these complaints appear to be the impetus for today's hearing. Over the past month, however, the Department has worked with press outlets to accommodate their concerns while enhancing security. We anticipate that there will be additional announcements regarding these ongoing discussions.

The second topic of today's hearing appears to be how the Department of Labor calculates the number of "green jobs" in the U.S. economy. This is the third hearing the majority has called on this topic and the third time Department of Labor officials have testified before us.

Last July, the Brookings Institution issued an important report on "green jobs" with the following findings:

- First, green jobs employ almost 2.7 million Americans—more than the fossil fuel industry and twice the size of the bioscience sector.
- Second, the green economy has expanded at greater rates than the economy as a whole.
- Third, the green economy offers considerable and more highly paid opportunities for low and middle-skilled workers.
- Fourth, the green economy is manufacturing and export intensive, both of which are critical for America's future.

Since this report was issued, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated that the number of "green jobs" is even higher, reporting that over three million jobs that have helped rebuild our economy.

This news should be welcomed by policymakers in Congress. Unfortunately, this Committee seems more intent on challenging the methodologies used by Bureau of Labor Statistics rather than helping put people back to work.

I thank the witnesses for being here yet again today, and I look forward to their testimony.

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