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BLS STARTS COLLECTING DATA FROM RETAIL ESTABLISHMENTS IN THE ORLANDO, FLORIDA AREA FOR THE CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

The United States Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) will begin collecting data from retail and service establishments for the Consumer Price Index (CPI) in the Orlando, Florida, area in February 2017. According to Regional Commissioner Janet Rankin, the communities of Lake, Orange, Osceola, and Seminole Counties make up one of six areas in which such CPI data will be collected beginning this year. Collection for the Housing portion of the CPI began in April 2016 from residents and real estate owners and agents. The other areas added in 2016 were Rochester, NY; Clarksburg, WV; Flint, MI; Meridian, MS; and Santa Rosa, CA.

The Consumer Price Index is one of the nation's most important economic indicators. It is a principal gauge of inflation used widely in the formulation and evaluation of economic policy; adjusting COLA payments under many government programs including payments to Social Security beneficiaries, retired military and federal civil service employees and survivors; adjusting agreements including rentals/leases, wages and pensions, and for collective bargaining. It is a measure of the average change in prices paid by urban consumers for a fixed market basket of goods and services. The CPI is an estimate based on a group of representative prices paid for items including food, clothing, shelter, fuels, transportation, medical services, and other goods and services people buy for day-to-day living.

The BLS periodically updates the geographic areas across the country in which prices are collected. The last CPI revision was in 1998 based on the 1990 Census of Population. The new design reflects shifts in the U.S. population based on the 2010 Decennial Census. The CPI will transition from the current 87-area design to a new 75-area design over a period of about 5 years. During this time, 21 new areas will be added and work in 31 current areas will be discontinued; counties covered in other areas may change as well based on updated information from the Office of Management and Budget.

From February through July, BLS employees will make personal visits to explain the survey to retail establishments selected as a result of telephone surveys that asked local residents where they bought various goods and services. During these visits, items and services will be selected and described. BLS staff will begin visiting these establishments on a regular basis in September to track changes in prices. These data will be used for the first time in the January 2018 CPI. The interviews are brief and no one will be asked to fill out any forms. Data collected from businesses and households by BLS are held in strict confidence and used for statistical purposes only.

Representatives will carry official identification and are U.S. Department of Labor employees. Local staff members are part-time Economic Assistants who are trained to collect data in person and by telephone using portable tablet computers.

Further information regarding the CPI or the broad range of economic data available from the BLS may be obtained by contacting the Atlanta Regional Office at (404) 893-4222 or by visiting the BLS website at www.bls.gov/.