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Committee on National Statistics ● National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine

CNSTAT Mourns the Passing of Katherine K. Wallman

Katherine Wallman, chief statistician of the United States (retired), died on January 17, 2024, at age 80 after a short illness. It is hard to overstate the extent to which she embodied and contributed to the federal statistical system during her long career of federal service. She began her career in federal statistics at the National Center for Education Statistics, where she helped fund CNSTAT's first study on setting statistical priorities. She then served in the chief statistician's office in the U.S. Office of Management and Budget and in the Commerce Department (the policy and standards setting part of the office was moved there briefly). She left federal service in 1981 to become the first executive director of the newly formed Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics (COPAFS), established to speak for the value of federal statistics during an era of severe budget cuts. During that time, she served on the CNSTAT panel that produced *Surveying the Nation's Scientists and Engineers: A Data System for the 1990s* (1989). She was COPAFS executive director until 1992 when she became the chief statistician and head of the OMB Statistical and Science Policy Office, a post she held until her retirement from federal service at the beginning of 2017.

In her role as chief statistician, she represented the United States at international organizations including the UN and OECD, serving as the chair of the UN Statistical Commission (the highest body governing international statistical policy), and twice serving as chair of the Conference of European Statisticians, UN Economic Commission for Europe. Among her many accomplishments as chief statistician were overseeing the revision of Statistical Policy Directive No. 15 on race and ethnicity classification in 1997; the enactment of the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002 and the issuance of Statistical Policy Directive No. 1 on Fundamental Responsibilities of Federal Statistical Agencies and Recognized Statistical units in 2014 (both now part of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018); and the development of guidance from an Interagency Technical Working Group (which she co-chaired) that led to publication of the Supplemental Poverty Measure (based on the 1995 CNSTAT report, *Measuring Poverty: A New Approach*) in 2011. Each of these initiatives and many others required her boundless energy, her steadfast dedication, and her legendary skills in bringing people and agencies with different viewpoints together for the common good.

She remained active professionally after her retirement, serving on the Council of the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research at the University of Michigan, the Board of the Association of Public Data Users, the Population Association of America Committee on Population Statistics, the American Statistical Association Task Force on 2020 Census Quality Indicators, the CNSTAT panel that produced *A Vision and Roadmap for Education Statistics* (2022), and numerous projects with the ASA Science Policy Office in support of federal statistics. Over her career she retained special interest in increasing cooperation between the several levels of government in the production of national statistics, strengthening the interface between academic and government statisticians, and enhancing the statistical literacy of the public. A Presidential Meritorious Executive, she was an elected member of the International Statistical Institute, a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and a founding member of the International Association for Official Statistics. She was a leader in the American Statistical Association, elected as a fellow in 1983, serving as president in 1992, and receiving its Founders Award in 2007. She received a B.A. in sociology from Wellesley College.