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## Trump Selects BLS Critic To Lead Agency

BY MERIDITH MCGRAW

President Trump said on Monday that he planned to nominate E.J. Antoni, the chief economist at the Heritage Foundation, to lead the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Antoni, a longtime critic of the agency's handling of jobs data, had the support of conservatives such as former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon.

Last month Trump fired the agency's head, Erika McEntarfer, following a weak jobs report. The president alleged the agency's data were "rigged."

"E.J. will ensure that the Numbers released are HONEST and ACCURATE," Trump wrote in a social-media post.

The Wall Street Journal previously reported Antoni was under consideration for the position, which requires Senate confirmation.

BLS is an independent agency under the Labor Department that is responsible for measuring and analyzing data on jobs, wages, and the economy, including the monthly jobs report, and helps paint a picture of America's overall economic health. Its data influence private- and public-sector decision-making, including the Federal Reserve's decisions on interest rates.

Economists defended McEntarfer and said that revisions, even large ones, are evidence of the system's integrity. They added that Trump's move throws the quality of America's statistical apparatus into question.

William Beach, whom Trump picked to lead BLS during his first term, said on CNN that the decision to dismiss McEntarfer over the jobs report was "damaging" and "undermines credibility in BLS."

Antoni has regularly criticized the agency's data collecting methods.

"There are better ways to collect, process, and disseminate data—that is the task for the next BLS commissioner, and only consistent delivery of accurate data in a timely manner will rebuild the trust that has been lost over the last several years," Antoni recently posted on X.

Antoni called for the removal of McEntarfer as head of BLS on Bannon's podcast following the release of a weak July jobs report. Hours later Trump fired her.

Antoni holds a Ph.D. in economics from Northern Illinois University and is a senior fellow at the Committee to Unleash Prosperity, an organization that promotes conservative, supply-side economics.

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