From the editor

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The world economy continues to struggle with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, although the introduction of vaccines gives hope that the disease will be overcome. While some of the works in this issue discuss the economic aspects of the disease, most are devoted to more traditional topics. However, many of them were taken from speeches and presentations made at NABE's October 2020 virtual annual meeting. We thank the Peterson Foundation for its support in publishing these.

President Charles Evans of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago—where the NABE Annual Meeting had been scheduled to take place—discussed the Federal Reserve's new monetary policy strategy. In the absence of evident inflationary pressure, the FOMC has announced that it will not tighten policy when unemployment rates are low—even when they are lower than estimates of the natural rate. The FOMC's inflation target is now an average of rates reaching back to the past; in other words, observed inflation above 2% will no longer by itself trigger tightening, so long as the average of the current rate and those in a recent period do not exceed 2%. Evans noted that if such a strategy had been in place in the past decade the increase in the FOMC's federal funds target may not have taken place.

In the current contentious political environment, Nobel Prize winner Roger Myerson spoke at the annual meeting on the fundamentals of a stable democracy. It goes beyond elections: to demonstrate a commitment to maintaining democratic rules, it is highly desirable that a potential leader have a track record of good performance in substantive offices below the top. A nation which devolves significant decision-making to subnational units provides a good environment to that end. Myerson warned in his October talk that the USA should in the future avoid again electing a president without substantive experience in public office.

In her NABE presidential address Constance Hunter spoke about how the pandemic may reinforce or weaken longer-term economic trends. It appears that the necessities of operating in a new way has sped the dissemination of many technologies as well as re-ignited business formation and, could, potentially, spur growth. However, the pandemic has also laid bare many of the inequities in our society, and raised the need that increased distress not become lasting.

Paul Volcker—who was, of course, the namesake of NABE's Economic Policy Award—was arguably (I would say, obviously!) the most remarkable and accomplished economic policymaker of the second half of the Twentieth Century. A panel discussion by 3 major figures who long interacted with Volcker—Sheila Bair, Don Kohn, and John Taylor—discussed the man and his legacy.

The outbreak of the pandemic spurred many economists to seek new ways to capture developments. In their paper, which received a Contributed Paper award, Xiaobing Shuai, Christine Chmura, and James Stichcomb discuss how an examination of real-time job posting data reveals how the outbreak of the pandemic, and the Paycheck Protection Program, affected labor demand and wages across industries.

Increased female participation in market activity is highly desirable to improve both economic performance and social welfare. While most societies formally endorse that goal, real-world barriers exist. One grim one is violence. Ummad Mazhar documents how violence in regions of Pakistan differentially limits female employment in the formal economy.

Scott Frame reviews Anjan Thakor's *The Purpose of Banking...* Thakor's book is a comprehensive examination of the economic role of banking, and how policy can facilitate achieving an optimal system. Frame lauds the work, but has qualifications about some of the author's analysis, perhaps most importantly the discussion of a bank's "higher purpose."

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