



October 10, 2007

Honorable Dave Obey
Chairman
Honorable Jerry Lewis
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Capitol Building, H-218
Washington, DC 20515-6015

Dear Representative Obey and Representative Lewis

We are writing to you as members of the Census Project, a collaboration of state and local governments, civil rights and labor groups, housing and child advocates, businesses, and research organizations interested in a fair and accurate Census 2010. We are extremely concerned about how the terms of the current Fiscal Year 2008 Continuing Resolution (CR) are adversely affecting preparations for the next decennial census.

As you know, the recently enacted Continuing Resolution limits spending at all federal agencies to their FY07 levels for six weeks. The terms of the CR pose unique problems for the Census Bureau as it ramps up for the 2010 Census. The Administration requested a 38.5% increase in funding for the Bureau in FY 2008 to fund preparations and testing activities, including the important 2008 Census Dress Rehearsal and the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) program. Without this influx of additional funding, the Bureau will be compelled to seriously curtail or cancel immediate preparations for the decennial census. These actions could have long-term adverse consequences for the decennial, such as:

- **Increasing Decennial Census Costs by \$1.5 billion**
 - Census Director Louis Kincannon estimates taxpayers will pay \$1.5 billion more in costs if the Bureau returns to using paper forms instead of handheld computers scheduled for testing in the Dress Rehearsal. The Bureau will not use handheld computers in 2010 if the devices are not fully tested in the Dress Rehearsal.

- **Compiling incomplete records of American households**
 - Delaying implementation of the LUCA program will impede the ability of states, cities, counties and towns to verify the Bureau's records of street-by-street addresses of all housing units and to ensure none are missed.

- **Curtailling or Canceling Census Dress Rehearsal**
 - Before the end of the year, hiring and training for the Dress Rehearsal must be completed to guarantee that operations are ready to launch in March 2008. If the agency cannot hire and adequately train sufficient numbers of temporary census staff, it may be forced to seriously curtail or cancel the dress rehearsal—the only dry run of the decennial in a census-like environment.

- **Precluding testing of key systems in Census Dress Rehearsal**
 - New outreach and promotion efforts for reaching hard-to-count populations must be tested in the Dress Rehearsal if they are to be used in the census. The Bureau must also test a data capture system, which is essential for processing large amounts of data in a timely and accurate way. Before the CR expires, the Bureau must sign contracts to keep these planned evaluations in the Dress Rehearsal.

All of these activities are important for both modernizing Census 2010 to keep costs down and to ensure accuracy. As you know, census data are used to apportion seats in Congress as well as to determine funding for numerous federal programs. According to the Brookings Institution, in Fiscal Year 2004, more than 100 federal programs allocated almost \$323.6 billion annually based on census population data. This includes such vital programs as:

- Medical assistance programs, \$183 billion;
- Highway planning and construction, \$31 billion;
- Housing assistance, \$22 billion;
- Title 1 educational grants, \$8 billion;
- School lunches, \$7 billion; and,
- Head Start, \$6 billion

The fairness and accuracy of Census 2010 will be compromised by a continuing stalemate over FY '08 funding. It is estimated that under the terms of the current Continuing Resolution, about \$35 million in decennial census planning funds have already been lost. According to Census Bureau Director Kincannon, "You can't buy time. If you get the money in six weeks,

we have lost six weeks and we can never make them up, and that doesn't change the date of the census." (*Associated Press, 10/3/07*)

We strongly urge you to exempt the Census Bureau, as was done prior to Census 2000 several times, from any flat-line funding requirements of a Continuing Resolution should it be necessary to pass another short-term measure when the current resolution expires on November 16. Furthermore, we hope that the ultimate decennial budget will fully fund the Administration's FY08 request, as well as provide an additional \$19 million, to support the immediate launch of the Community Partnership program, which is vital for ensuring that historically hard-to-count populations fully participate in the census.

Thank you for your consideration of the unique problems facing the Census Bureau under the current CR and for considering this request to exempt the Bureau from the terms of any future CRs Congress may need to consider.

Sincerely,

American Sociological Association

Asian American Justice Center

Association of Population Centers

Consortium of Social Science
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