



The Census Project

December 8, 2008

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Obey:

We are writing to you as members of the Census Project (www.thecensusproject.org), 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. Specifically, we are contacting you regarding recent revelations that the Census Bureau will be spending significantly less on its Census 2010 advertising and community outreach plans as compared to Census 2000—a course that could jeopardize the participation of hard-to-count populations.

As reported in the *Washington Post* on November 26, the current Continuing Resolution, which allocated \$4 billion for Fiscal Year 2009 decennial census planning activities, does not include sufficient funds to support the paid advertising campaign, the Census in the Schools campaign, and the Community Partnership program at levels comparable to Census 2000. During Census 2000, these programs were credited with reversing four decades of declining response rates. The programs also proved to be cost efficient. Every one percentage point increase in the decennial response rate for the mail-back initiative of the 2000 questionnaire saved taxpayers \$100 million in the last decennial census.

If the Census Bureau is serious about achieving a similar successful track record in 2010, it must have adequate funding to support a multi-tiered communications and outreach plan. As you craft the final FY 2009 appropriations package, we urge your committee to consider increasing Census 2010 appropriations at a level not less than the inflation-adjusted amount spent in 2000 on advertising, promotions, partnership support and the Census in the Schools outreach program. Given the incredible challenges facing the Census Bureau and its army of census enumerators in 2010,

Census 2010 requires the proper tools to raise response rates to the initial mail campaign and to make every effort to reduce the undercount of traditionally hard-to-count populations.

We acknowledge that Congress and the incoming Obama administration face tight fiscal constraints. However, Census 2010 represents the largest peacetime mobilization of this country. Its outcome will determine the reapportionment of Congress and distribution of over \$400 billion in federal funds. We need to know that decisions this important are based on an accurate census count.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. Please be assured that we want to do everything possible to assist your efforts in regards to Census 2010.

Sincerely,

American Statistical Association

Asian American Justice Center

Association of Population Centers

Coalition on Human Needs

The City of New York

Consortium of Social Science
Associations

Council of Professional Associations on
Federal Statistics

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Southeast Michigan Census Council

The U.S. Conference of Mayors