



The Census Project

January 15, 2009

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Capitol Building, H-218
Washington, DC 20515-6015

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. As your committee considers an economic stimulus package, in consultation with the incoming Obama Administration, we ask that you include funding for the 2010 Decennial Census.

As you know, preparations for the next census are well underway. The success of Census 2010 hinges on groundwork the Census Bureau and its network of regional offices and community partnerships must conduct in Fiscal Year 2009. This groundwork includes an extensive grassroots effort to promote participation in Census 2010, especially targeted at hard-to-count populations, and a national canvassing operation to verify all residential addresses in the United States.

With job creation at an all-time low, Census 2010 positions represent the only new employment opportunities in many communities. These jobs, albeit temporary, offer decent wages and steady work. Equally important, the Census Bureau must fill these positions with qualified applicants to ensure the success of Census 2010. Regional offices are screening a record number of applicants and preparing to train thousands of address listers and census takers over the next two years. Further, key stakeholders are encouraging the Census Bureau to expand the Community Partnership Program and triple the number of partnership specialists from 700 to more than 2,000. These specialists are integral to delivering high Census response rates—especially from hard-to-count populations.

Despite support from the Administration and Congress, current funding for the 2010 census has lagged considerably behind comparable Census 2000 funding levels for many important operations. In particular, the funding shortfall is adversely affecting communications and outreach programs, jeopardizing the Census Bureau's ability to boost mail response rates and lower the cost of subsequent door-to-door visits. Equally important, more census takers with expanded training will help ensure that unresponsive households, especially in economically depressed areas, are counted accurately.

Given the pressing timeline of Census 2010 and its unmet needs, it is appropriate to include at least \$1 billion for Census 2010 in the economic stimulus plan. With this support, the Census Bureau could invest in additional advertising, increase the numbers of community partnership specialists, hire more enumerators, open more offices in areas of hard-to-count populations, and expand the training of both community partnership specialists and enumerators. All of these steps are necessary to expand decennial capabilities, create a better enumerator environment, and generate the highest levels of participation in Census 2010.

We acknowledge that Congress and the Obama Administration face tight fiscal constraints. However, Census 2010 represents the nation's largest peacetime mobilization. Its outcome will determine the reapportionment of Congress and distribution of over \$400 billion per year in federal funds to states and localities. We need to know that these important decisions are based on an accurate census count.

Finally, the Census Bureau also needs new leadership to implement the last phases of the decennial census plan. The Census Bureau needs an experienced director who can supervise the complex work plan that will ensure a complete and accurate Census 2010. We urge you to work with the Obama administration to quickly name a new director.

Thank you for your consideration of our request and your support of the Census Bureau and its efforts to conduct a fair and accurate 2010 Decennial Census.

Sincerely,

American Sociological Association

American Statistical Association

Arab American Institute Foundation

Asian American Justice Center

Association of Population Centers

The City Of New York

Coalition for Health Services Research

Consortium of Social Science Associations

Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics

Japanese American Citizens League

Marketing Research Association (MRA)

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National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund

National Institute for Latino Policy (NILP)

National Multi Housing Council

Organization for Chinese Americans National Center

Population Association of America

Population Resource Center

U.S. Conference of Mayors