



July 25, 2006

The Honorable Frank Wolf
Chairman
Subcommittee on Science, State, Justice, and Commerce
Committee on Appropriations
H-309 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Wolf:

We understand that the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Science, the Departments of State, Justice, and Commerce, and Related Agencies will be holding a hearing on July 27, 2006 on the Census to consider the consequences of inadequate funding for the Census Bureau. We write to share our concerns about the inadequate funding for the Census Bureau and the potential devastating impact to the Asian American community from the resulting compromised data collection.

Founded in 1991, the Asian American Justice Center (AAJC) (formerly the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium) works to advance the human and civil rights of Asian Americans through advocacy, public policy, public education, and litigation. AAJC is a nationally recognized expert on the census and other federal data collection issues, and is a member of the 2010 Census Advisory Committee. Prior to the 2010 CAC, AAJC was a member of the Decennial Census Advisory Committee since the beginning of 2000. AAJC helped lead education and outreach efforts for Census 2000 in the Asian American community and believed that the outreach, education and language access efforts by the Census Bureau led to the best count of Asian Americans of any census.

To that end, we are very concerned about the current inadequate funding for **2010 census planning and the American Community Survey (ACS)**. The \$58.3 million in funding cuts from these programs approved by the House of Representatives place the accuracy and cost-effectiveness of the next census at great risk, and threaten the reliability of key social and economic characteristics data collected in the ACS. Although the decennial count is three years away, 2007 is a pivotal year in the planning cycle. The agency will evaluate results from content tests and finalize the content in the first half of fiscal year 2007. The Census Bureau must prepare for the 2008 Census Dress Rehearsal, the only dry-run of the full census process. The agency must award a contract for the important census promotion and outreach campaign, and continue to administer large contracts to deploy critical data processing systems.

Full implementation of the ACS also is a central component of a re-engineered census. In order to serve as a reliable, comparable replacement for the traditional census long form, the ACS must collect data from the entire population, including people living in group quarters such as college dorms, nursing homes, military barracks, and prisons.

In our view, the Administration's proposed funding level for the agency represents the minimum amount needed to ensure effective preparations for the decennial count and comprehensive data collection in the American Community Survey. If Congress does not restore funds cut by the House, the Census Bureau has announced that it will abandon plans to use GPS-equipped handheld computers to gather information from unresponsive households. This design improvement promises to save \$1 billion in the long-run by eliminating the costly reliance on paper census questionnaires. The Census Bureau also says it will eliminate group quarters from the ACS, placing a complete transition from the census long form in jeopardy.

Adequate funding for the census in FY2007 is a wise and necessary investment. Laying the final groundwork for innovative design features, such as mailing a second form to unresponsive households, equipping census takers with hand-held computers, and replacing the long form with the ACS, will save millions of dollars in the long run and will help ensure a more accurate count in 2010 by reducing operational risk. Equally important, accurate, comprehensive data from the Census Bureau help ensure that federal dollars are spent wisely and effectively for law enforcement, disaster preparation, education, transportation improvements, and other key programs.

For the Asian American community, the Census Bureau provides the most in-depth data on the broader community, as well as the different ethnic groups. These funding cuts and the potential negative impact on the Bureau's ability to continue to provide accurate and detailed data would leave the Asian American community with virtually no data on its people and thus no ability to adequately serve this often underserved community.

In closing, we urge you to fully fund the President's request for the Census Bureau in conference, in order to support critical planning activities for the next census.

Sincerely,

Terry M. Ao
Director of Census & Voting Programs
Asian American Justice Center

cc: The Honorable Alan Mollohan
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