

July 25, 2007

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

RE: HEARING ON INADEQUATE CENSUS BUREAU FUNDING FOR 2010

Dear Congressman Wolf:

I am writing to you regarding the hearing you and your subcommittee will be having on the Census Bureau's budget. My knowledge of and interest in the Census comes from my work as the Nevada State Demographer; a staff person for Clark County Comprehensive Planning in Las Vegas, Nevada; and as a student. In Clark County, I worked with the Census Bureau's regional and local census office in preparation for the 2000 Census and as Nevada's State Demographer I participated in Full Count Review. Nevada continues to work with the Bureau through the Federal State Cooperative for Population Estimates.

I want to share with you and your colleagues the concerns I have about the Census Bureau's budget and the impact that proposed reductions will have on the 2010 Census, the Master Address File, American Community Survey (ACS), and the Economic Census. I have itemized below what I understand to be the cuts that will occur to the Census Bureau's budget and discuss their impacts on the Census as it relates to Nevada.

- **Eliminating the GPS hand-held computers and TIGER Realignment**
Implementing the GPS hand-held computers for address listing and for enumeration purposes is important for Nevada not only because of its large counties with their high growth but also for our rural areas. In 2000, we had areas that had been built in the time period between 1995 and 1998/99 that were part of the Update/Leave questionnaire process. This activity combined with the paper map system was labor intensive for the Local Census Office. GPS will allow efficiencies for these expanding urban areas and will improve the ability of enumerators to deal with our frontier counties. Using GPS-equipped technology during field activities to determine latitude and longitude will enable local governments to better provide information to the Bureau about remote or isolated housing units. We have one county where not only one entire road was missed but the names on the TIGER maps did not correspond to the local names for them. With GPS, housing units can be located with a commonly-recognized terminology.
- **Not including group quarters in ACS**
ACS is full of promise, but is still a work in progress. Not including group quarters' populations weakens the survey not only as a replacement for the traditional long form, but also hampers our ability to compare and review the ACS results against the 2000 Census results. ACS has the potential to help inform communities about the on-going health of their social, economic, and housing sectors allowing them to make better decisions. But without full implementation of ACS, the public will not be able to fully review and interpret the data in comparison to the traditional long form results. Many of the long form questions go back in one form or another to the early days of the Census during the founding of the republic.
- **Halting state, local and county geographic liaison activities and would stop all field work on Master Address File (MAF) Geocoding Office Resolution**
This will negatively impact the inclusion of new units in the Master Address File and hamper the input of local government review of the MAF through the Local Updates of Census Addresses program. The Census Bureau will have problems building relationships and credibility with local and tribal governments for their involvement in any review of the MAF. I continue to run into cases where local governments are concerned that their community was not completely covered in 2000 even if external evidence is to the contrary.

- **Cuts in the Economic Census**

There were only one or two coffee shops in Las Vegas before Starbucks became ubiquitous. I talked with a gentleman who had opened a new one after having moved his family there. He opened his coffee shop thinking that it would be successful because Las Vegas was booming. He was closed a year later. The point of this story is that it is one thing for someone to invest and fail in a small business because of their lack of due diligence. It is quite another to restrict the information that a small business person can use to make informed decisions before risking their livelihood on an entrepreneurial venture. Data from the Economic Census, as well as the decennial census and ACS, are important tools for prudent investment and other decisions in the private sector.

Finally, I have heard references to the private sector paying for information from the Census Bureau. One of the Bureau's strengths is that its data is in the public domain. Anybody can make use of the data that this federal agency provides. With a little effort, someone considering a small business can develop a business plan that is equal to research and analysis from a professional marketing firm. I recently had the occurrence of purchasing two sets of population projections from different vendors. In both cases, there are restrictions on how much I can (or even if I can) disseminate their data because of licensing restrictions. It is hard to imagine how the Census Bureau would begin managing the selling of its data. Federal law requires the American people and businesses to respond to censuses; the information that they provide is not a commodity but a national resource that helps government, non-profit social agencies, businesses, and individuals make informed decisions and evaluate the results of those decisions.

I hope that the information I have provided to you is helpful in your deliberations about the Census Bureau's budget.

Sincerely,

Jeff Hardcastle, AICP
Nevada State Demographer

cc: Congresswoman Shelley Berkley
Congressman Jim Gibbons
Congressman Jon Porter
Senator John Ensign
Senator Harry Reid
Congressman Alan Mollohan
Congressman Jose Serrano