



# The Census Project

This letter was sent to the chairs and ranking members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, the chairs and ranking members of the House and Senate Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations Subcommittees, and all other members of the House and Senate Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations Subcommittees.

March 28, 2008

Chairman Robert C. Byrd  
Committee on Appropriations  
Capitol Building, S-131  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Byrd:

We are writing to you as members of the Census Project ([www.thecensusproject.org](http://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 the Appropriations Committees begin consideration of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations bill, **we are asking you to support the Administration's request of \$2.6 billion for the Census Bureau.** This funding is necessary **to support the significant ramp-up activities conducted in the final year of preparations for the 2010 decennial census.**

The Census Bureau offers the most comprehensive demographic and economic data about the nation. The agency produces annual data that are used by federal agencies to determine the allocation of over *\$300 billion in federal funding* (2007, Brookings Institution) and by the private sector to inform *trillions of dollars in key investment and other business decisions*. Census population numbers also are used to apportion seats in Congress and draw legislative district boundaries. The Administration's budget request is a modest investment compared to the significant fiscal decisions based on data the Census Bureau produces.

The FY 2009 request is double the FY 2008 appropriation of \$1.3 billion. However, as you know, the Census Bureau's budget is largely cyclical and

must increase dramatically in the years preceding the decennial census to pay for necessary preparations. These activities include:

- opening and staffing 150 “early” local census offices;
- canvassing all neighborhoods and rural areas to verify addresses (on the Master Address File) and geographic locations (in the TIGER system);
- finalizing data capture, data processing, and telecommunications systems;
- printing hundreds of millions of census questionnaires and other forms; and,
- conducting promotional activities, including the Regional Partnership Program to assure the greatest possible level of participation in 2010.

The groundwork done in the final year before the census will, to a large extent, determine the success of the 2010 Census. The Census Bureau must receive, at a minimum, the President’s requested funding level, to ensure that vital preparations are thorough and timely.

We know that the Census Bureau is facing unprecedented challenges associated with the uncertain performance of handheld computers for field activities, and that these challenges will affect the agency’s overall budget for the census. We urge Congress to continue its close oversight of final census preparations, to ensure that funds are spent wisely, and to recognize that failure to provide adequate funding in 2009 will increase the risk of an inaccurate count, especially among historically hard-to-enumerate populations.

Fiscal Year 2009 is also a pivotal year for the American Community Survey (ACS), which has replaced the traditional census long form. In 2010, the ACS will provide the first demographic, economic and housing characteristics data for areas as small as census tracts and block groups, based on five years worth of data collection for households (2005 – 2009). To assure the data collected in the last year are as accurate as in previous years, the Census Bureau needs sufficient funding to continue sampling three million households that receive the ACS annually.

The Census Bureau must support other cyclical and ongoing programs that produce demographic and economic statistics vital to Congress and other policymakers. For example, in FY 2009, the Census Bureau will tabulate and publish data from the 2007 Economic Census, launch an initiative to improve the collection of economic statistics on the growing service sector, and continue the Survey of Income and Program Participation. Continuation of these activities is particularly important in the current difficult economic

climate, as these data provide a basis for key economic indicators and help Congress assess the prudence of fiscal policy proposals.

Thank you for considering the unique needs of the Census Bureau in FY 2009 and for working on behalf of all Americans to ensure that the 2010 Census is accurate and fair in all communities.

Sincerely,

American Sociological Association  
American Statistical Association  
Arab American Institute Foundation  
Asian American Justice Center  
Association of Population Centers  
Association of Public Data Users  
City of Los Angeles  
City of New York  
Consortium of Social Science Associations  
Council for Marketing and Opinion Research  
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics  
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law  
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights  
Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund  
National Association of Counties  
National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO)  
Educational Fund  
National Association of Towns and Townships  
National Multi Housing Council  
Population Association of America  
Population Resource Center  
Southeast Michigan Census Council

Members of the Census Project are listed at:  
<http://www.thecensusproject.org/Stakeholderlist.htm>