



February 19, 2010

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey:

We are writing to you as members of the Census Project (www.thecensusproject.org), an ad hoc coalition of state and local governments, civil rights and labor groups, housing and child advocates, businesses, professional societies, and research organizations interested in a fair and accurate decennial census. As your committee prepares to consider the Fiscal Year 2011 Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bill, we ask you to include the full funding level President Obama requested for the U.S. Census Bureau.

Decennial Census

As you know, the Administration requested approximately \$1.3 billion for the Census Bureau in FY2011. Next year, the Bureau will conclude census operations and begin the final phases of Census 2010: evaluation and data publication. Specifically, the agency must process and tabulate census data; publish state population totals for congressional apportionment, detailed population counts for redistricting under P.L. 94-171, and summary data products; conduct post-census evaluations; and close Local Census Offices and Regional Census Centers. The 2010 census is not complete until the Census Bureau carries out these operations fully and efficiently.

While closing out Census 2010, the Census Bureau also must begin research and development for the 2020 census. As an illustration of the groundwork already being laid for the next enumeration, the President proposed a \$26 million initiative to update the Master Address File and TIGER digital mapping system continuously throughout the decade. The Administration believes ongoing updates of the address list and maps could support a "targeted address canvassing operation (as opposed to a 100 percent operation)" for the 2020 census and result in significant cost savings. We believe the proposal represents a sound investment that could help contain

the overall cost of the next decennial and improve the accuracy of the all-important address and mapping base for the enumeration.

American Community Survey and Other Statistical Programs

In addition to ensuring thorough completion of the 2010 census, the budget request would allow the agency to continue its other crucial operations, such as maintaining and improving the American Community Survey (ACS) and supporting its other surveys and population estimates programs.

The President is seeking a \$44 million increase for the ACS. The additional funding will support an expansion of the ACS sample from its current 2.9 million to 3.5 million housing units, or 2.5 percent of the population annually. With the growing number of housing units nationwide and a growing population, a larger sample is needed to preserve the scientific integrity of the survey and improve the collection of reliable data on smaller population groups (such as ethnic and language minorities). This funding also would allow for improved telephone and field data collection; 100 percent follow-up of unresponsive households in Remote Alaska and small American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Homeland areas; and a comprehensive review of three-year and five-year ACS estimates. These activities are imperative for ensuring the ACS can continue to provide valid data about the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the American people on an ongoing, annual basis.

Further, the budget proposal gives the Census Bureau funding it needs to prepare for the 2012 quinquennial Economic Census and Census of Governments, both conducted in the years ending in "2" and "7." 2011 is the second year of the five-year cycle for both activities. Data collection occurs in 2013, reflecting 2012 activities and information. During these turbulent economic times, the Economic Census must be done accurately to acquire good data about U.S. manufacturing, trade services, finance, construction, transportation, and most other industries and economic sectors. To this end, the Administration has requested \$113 million for the Economic Census in FY 2011.

We know that Congress faces tight fiscal constraints and that there are many worthy programs funded through the Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bill. However, programs supported by the Census Bureau are also vital, providing essential data used for reapportionment and redistricting at all levels of government, composition of the Electoral College and distribution of almost \$460 billion annually in federal program funds. Policymakers should have confidence that decisions this important are based

on the outcome of a well-conceived and executed decennial census and on the conduct of credible and well-managed ongoing surveys.

For all of these reasons, we ask the Appropriations Committee to support the Administration's FY2011 request and to reject any amendments that would boost funding for other programs by using the Census Bureau as an offset.

Thank you for your consideration of our request and for your support of the Census Bureau.

Sincerely,

Louis Kincannon, former director, U.S. Census Bureau
American Planning Association
American Sociological Association
American Statistical Association
Arab American Institute Foundation
Asian American Justice Center
Association of Population Centers
Consortium of Social Science Associations
City of New York
Demos
Japanese American Citizens League
Linda Loubert, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Economics Department, Morgan
State University
Marketing Research Association
National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational
Fund
National Education Association
National Multi Housing Council
Prison Policy Initiative
Southeast Michigan Census Council
The Population Association of America

cc: Honorable Jerry Lewis
Honorable Alan Mollohan
Honorable Frank Wolf