

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 13, 2012

ENSURE ACCURATE ALLOCATION OF FEDERAL FUNDS

PROTECT THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

Dear Colleague:

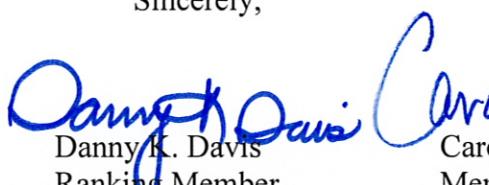
This week the Oversight and Government Reform Committee held a subcommittee hearing on whether to change current law to make the American Community Survey (ACS) voluntary. The ACS examines who we are as a nation and provides essential information for decision makers across the public and private sectors. Implemented under the Bush Administration with bipartisan support, the ACS replaced the Census Bureau's long-form in an effort to reduce costs and ensure greater accuracy. Prior to rolling out the ACS, the U.S. Census Bureau performed an assessment of a voluntary versus a mandatory survey, and the Bureau found a large decrease in responses and increased costs in tests of a voluntary approach.

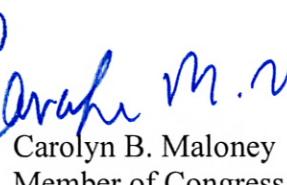
As supporters of the important information gathered through the ACS, we invite you to join us in signing the letter below in support of a mandatory approach. To sign on to the letter, please contact Yvette Cravins (Rep. Cummings) at (202) 225-5051 or Elizabeth Darnall (Rep. Maloney) at (202) 225-7944 by Thursday, March 15, 2012.

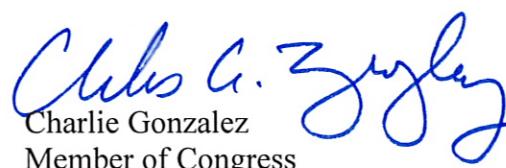
Sincerely,


Elijah E. Cummings
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and
Government Reform


Judy Chu
Member of Congress


Danny K. Davis
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Health
Care, District of Columbia,
Census and the National Archives


Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress


Charlie Gonzalez
Member of Congress

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March 13, 2012

The Honorable Darrell E. Issa
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
2157 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Issa:

We write to express our strong support for maintaining a mandatory approach for the American Community Survey (ACS). Implemented under the Bush Administration with bipartisan support, the ACS replaced the Census Bureau's long-form in an effort to reduce costs and ensure greater accuracy. The detailed information gathered in the ACS is the authoritative source of annual socioeconomic, housing, and demographic data regarding communities in the United States. The ACS is an important tool that guides businesses and governments in better serving the American people and growing our economy.

Proposals to make the ACS voluntary instead of mandatory would lower response rates and raise costs. The Census Bureau implemented the ACS after the 2000 Census to replace the decennial census long form, to provide annual statistics about the nation's population, and to streamline the decennial census. Before implementing the ACS, the Census Bureau tested the response rates for a mandatory versus a voluntary approach. The Bureau found that response rates decreased by a third for the voluntary survey, which meant a heavier workload for non-response follow-up efforts. More personal interviews had to be conducted, which raised costs significantly.

Data derived from the ACS serves a wide range of governmental, business, and research purposes. The ACS guides the equitable allocation of nearly \$400 billion in federal funding each year to communities throughout the United States, including to support veterans employment and job training programs, to improve the education of children from low-income households, and to develop formulas for allocations for housing and home energy aid. Law enforcement officials use ACS data to understand the characteristics of neighborhoods with higher rates of crime and to make decisions regarding how best to target law enforcement resources. Public safety officials rely on ACS data to prepare for natural disasters and other emergency response activities, including planning evacuation routes.

American industries also rely on ACS data to make investments. Across the private sector, ACS data is used to develop business location, investment, and expansion plans that support job creation and economic competitiveness. Regional economic and workforce

development organizations use ACS data to facilitate business attraction and retention efforts, entrepreneurship programs, and job training and education.

For all of these reasons, we strongly support maintaining a mandatory approach for the American Community Survey. The information gained through the survey is invaluable to both public and private sectors. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Eric E. Edwards
Darrell E. Issa

Judy Chu
Min-Jay Choy
Rain M. Higdon
Mazie K. Hirono

Eric E. Edwards

Carrie M. Maloney
Eleanor H. Norton

Chris C. Gelder
Charles B. Rangel
Barbara Boxer
Donna F. Edwards