



July 10, 2006

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and Science
Committee on Appropriations
S-146A The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby:

We hope you will consider the strong support of the diverse group of undersigned organizations for **full funding for the U.S. Census Bureau.**

In particular, we are very concerned about adequate funding for **2010 census planning and the American Community Survey (ACS)**. The \$53.3 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. Equally important, the cuts could undermine the effectiveness of many valuable programs, including law enforcement efforts and disaster preparation and response, which the House supported in approving the amendments.

Although the decennial count is three years away, 2007 is a pivotal year in the planning cycle. By law, the Census Bureau must submit proposed topics for the census to Congress by April 1, 2007. 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.

The House also reduced funding for economic and demographic statistical programs by \$5 million. These cuts will affect conduct of the 2007 Economic Census and the accuracy of the Master Address File, which anchors all household-based surveys and the census.

We recognize that, in shifting funds from the Census Bureau to law enforcement activities, the House was seeking to support other worthwhile programs in a time of diminished federal resources. Ironically, though, funds for many key anti-crime programs, such as the Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grants, are allocated to localities based on census data, and local authorities use census data and maps to target resources to neighborhoods most in need of anti-crime initiatives. Accurate, comprehensive data from the Census Bureau help ensure that federal dollars are spent wisely and effectively.

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.

In closing, we urge you to fully fund the President's request for the Census Bureau and to oppose any amendments that would reduce this amount to pay for other programs within the Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations account.

Sincerely,

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

Sally T. Hillsman, PhD, Executive Officer
American Sociological Association

Arab American Institute Foundation

Asian American Justice Center

Association of Population Centers

Deborah A. Gona, PhD, Vice President
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City of Los Angeles

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Coalition on Human Needs

Howard J. Silver, PhD, Executive Director
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Ken Poole, Executive Director
Council for Community and Economic Research (formerly ACCRA)

Edward J. Spar, Executive Director
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics

International Council of Shopping Centers

Floyd Mori, Director, Public Policy
Japanese American Citizens League

Leadership Conference on Civil Rights

Larry Naake, Executive Director
National Association of Counties

National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund

National Conference of State Legislatures

National Low Income Housing Coalition

Dorothy Wong, Executive Director
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Population Association of America

Population Reference Bureau

Patricia C. Becker, Executive Director
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David Morganstein, V.P., Director
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