



October 4, 2007

Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairman
Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and Science
Committee on Appropriations
SD-144 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Mikulski and Ranking Member Shelby:

As members of the Census Project, a collaboration of organizations representing state and local governments, civil rights interests, business/industry, housing and child advocates, and scientists, we are writing to express our support for fully funding the Census Bureau in Fiscal Year 2008. As the Senate begins consideration of H.R. 3093, the Fiscal Year 2008 Commerce, Justice, Science appropriations bill, we are calling on all members of the U.S. Senate to, at a minimum, support the Committee's recommended amount and to vote against any amendments that would use the Bureau as a funding offset for other programs in the bill.

As you know, in July, the House of Representatives accepted amendments in committee and on the floor that reduced the Bureau's FY 2008 budget by \$40 million. These cuts would jeopardize aspects of the 2007 Economic Census and dash anticipated plans to launch the Community Partnership Program, which is vital to the Bureau's efforts to reach hard-to-count populations in the decennial census. We think this is a mistake and urge Congress to restore the funding in the final version of H.R. 3093.

2008 is a pivotal year on the road to the 2010 Census, the constitutionally mandated effort which determines the apportionment of the House and the Electoral College, the distribution of federal funds to states, counties and cities, and the allocation of investment by businesses of all sizes. In 2008, the Bureau will conduct the Census Dress Rehearsal, the only dry run of the full census process. The dress rehearsal will feature new methods (such as bilingual questionnaires and a targeted replacement mailing), new technologies (including hand-held computers and Global Positioning System software), updated address lists and digital maps, and new strategies for reaching hard-to-count populations. The dress rehearsal provides the only opportunity to test the integrated 2010 plan in a census-like environment. Evaluating innovative design features, such as a targeted replacement mailing and GPS-equipped handheld computers for field work, will save hundreds of millions of dollars in the long run and will help ensure a more accurate count in 2010 by reducing operational risk. Thus, adequate funding for the census in FY2008 is a wise and necessary investment

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Data collection and tabulation for the 2007 Economic Census and Census of Governments also take place next year. The Economic Census, with a proposed budget of \$128 million, produces the nation's most comprehensive picture of key industries; the data are widely used to evaluate the health of vital economic sectors and to plan for future growth and stability.

Past history indicates that there may be amendments offered during full Senate debate that would cut back various elements of the FY 2008 funding for the census. We urge you to oppose any amendments that reduce funding for the census. Decennial census data are used to determine program eligibility and the fair allocation of federal dollars. The latest figures from the Brookings Institution indicate that \$323.6 billion in federal funds from 100 programs—\$1,102 per person—was distributed to states and localities in FY 2004 based in whole or in part on census data or data derived from the census.

In conclusion, we realize the tight budget constraints that Congress is operating under this year. However, the decennial census is the linchpin of the federal statistical system. Full funding for the Census Bureau's FY 2008 budget request, and an additional \$19 million for the Community Partnerships program, is required to ensure that the planning for the nation's next census continues on a path that counts everybody in a fair and accurate way.

Sincerely,

The Census Project

Participants in the Census Project include:

American Sociological Association

Arab American Institute
Asian American Justice Center

Dr. Michael White
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Association of Population Centers

Leonard M. Gaines
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Association of Public Data Users

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