

December 10, 2008

# **CENSUS NEWS BRIEF**

## **Census Bureau Receives FY 2009 Funding and Prepares for New Administration**

**FY 2008 Supplemental Appropriations Passes:** In June, the President signed into law H.R. 2642, the Fiscal Year 2008 supplemental appropriations bill. The bill provided emergency funding for the Defense Department and other federal agencies, including **\$210 million** for the Census Bureau. The Census Bureau requested the money to maintain its Field Data Collection Automation (FDCA) contract with Harris Corporation, which is developing handheld computers for use in address canvassing next spring. Without this funding, the Census Bureau said, it would have canceled the Harris contract and scaled-back address canvassing, drawing from a sample of U.S. addresses instead.

**FY 2009 Appropriations Update:** Currently, most federal agencies are operating under a continuing funding resolution (CR), H.R. 2638, which expires on March 6, 2009. With few exceptions, the CR is funding agencies at their FY 2008 levels—a policy that leaves many agencies with less money than they had requested and were expecting in the new fiscal year. In the CR, only three agencies received full FY 2009 funding: the Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, and Veterans' Affairs, while miscellaneous agencies, including the Census Bureau, were given additional funding in support of specific programs.

The Census Bureau received **\$2.9 billion for the Periodic Censuses and Programs** account, the amount requested by the Bush Administration, allowing the agency to fully support its 2010 Decennial Census activities, including the FDCA contract and American Community Survey operations, in FY 2009. (\$2.7 billion of that amount is for the 2010 census.) The CR also incorporated necessary language, allowing the agency to use funds for additional promotion, outreach, and marketing activities.

The bureau's Salaries and Expenses account, however, is functioning at last year's funding level until Congress enacts a final bill for the current year (FY 2009 started on October 1). In the short term, "flat funding" will not affect key surveys – such as the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) -- and other ongoing operations, as long as Congress provides a higher level of funding in the final FY 2009 appropriations package. However, because the Census Bureau restored SIPP to a larger sample size (45,000 housing units) last September, in anticipation of a higher funding level, it is spending more on the survey than it can afford to sustain if Congress does not allocate the full amount requested for 2009 by March. Congressional leaders are meeting this month to negotiate the final FY 2009 funding package, so it is ready when Congress returns to work in January. Most likely, the Obama Administration will not submit its full budget request for FY 2010 until March as well.

**Concern about 2010 census Communications Campaign funding:** On November 26, the *Washington Post* reported that the Administration's overall 2010 census budget was not sufficient to

fund its marketing and promotion activities (paid advertising, Census in the Schools, and community partnerships) at levels comparable to Census 2000. These programs are widely credited with reversing four decades of declining mail response rates and reaching hard-to-count populations during the 2000 count.

This month, the Census Project sent a letter to the chairmen and ranking members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees and the Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations Subcommittees (The Census Project letter is posted at: <http://www.thecensusproject.org/CP%20approps%20letter%20-%20Dec08.pdf>). Stakeholders asked Congress to match or exceed the amount spent in 2000 (adjusted for inflation) for Census 2010 advertising, promotion, partnerships, and Census in the Schools, in the final FY2009 funding bill. The Bureau plans to spend \$170 million for these activities in FY 2010; it would need \$210 million to match the 2000 level.

**Obama Transition:** After the election, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) published a list of 13 urgent issues facing the next administration. The list includes the 2010 census, with GAO citing the “need to address the significant management and technology challenges” facing the Census Bureau. Specifically, GAO urged the incoming administration to focus on the handheld computers and to respond quickly if findings from this month’s field test in Fayetteville, NC suggest a need for further technical refinements.

The Census Project wrote to the President-elect, encouraging his quick nomination of a Census Director. The letter recommends the selection of “someone who has strong management expertise and intimate knowledge of all of the Bureau’s programs and surveys and not just its decennial census operations.” (The Census Project letter is posted at [http://www.thecensusproject.org/Obama\\_Transition.pdf](http://www.thecensusproject.org/Obama_Transition.pdf)). This sentiment was echoed in a December 4 *New York Times* editorial that urged President-elect Obama to name a “new census director as soon as possible” and the Senate to “fast track the nominee’s confirmation hearing.” The editorial went on to suggest “the new director should be a social scientist with proven leadership ability on large projects executed under pressure” and suggested Former Census Bureau Director, Dr. Ken Prewitt, would be an appropriate choice.

**Richardson tapped for Commerce Secretary:** President-Elect Obama has announced his selection of New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson to be the next Secretary of Commerce. During the Clinton Administration, Governor Richardson served as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and as Secretary of Energy. Before serving in the Cabinet, Richardson was a 7-term member of the House of Representatives, representing New Mexico’s 3rd congressional district.

The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) commended Governor Richardson’s nomination, saying they “look forward to working with Governor Richardson after his confirmation to ensure that we achieve the most accurate count possible of the nation’s population in 2010.”

**Congressional changes:** Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA) will no longer chair the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, which oversees the Census Bureau, when the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress convenes next month, after the House Democratic Caucus tapped him to chair the Energy and

Commerce Committee. Rep. Edolphus “Ed” Towns (D-NY), a committee member for 26 years and the next most senior member, is presumed to be in line for the chairmanship; he chaired the Subcommittee on Government Management, Organization, and Procurement in the last Congress. Rep. Towns will meet with the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee later this month, as a first step in the selection process. Final committee assignments will be made when Congress reconvenes in January.

In the Senate, Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-CT) retained his chairmanship of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, despite some opposition from Democrats upset about the senator’s support of Sen. John McCain in the presidential race. Lieberman’s committee has jurisdiction over the Census Bureau and must confirm the President’s nominee for Census Director.

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