



October 8, 2007

Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez
Office of the Secretary
Mailstop 61
U.S. Department of Commerce
14th & Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write to you as participants in the Census Project, a collaboration of 45 organizations representing cities and towns, civil rights organizations, business/industry, social service advocates, and scientists supporting a full and accurate 2010 Census and 2007 Economic Census.

As you know, as a result of Public Law 110-92, the U.S. Census Bureau budget will stay at Fiscal Year 2007 levels for the first 47 days of Fiscal Year 2008 (FY08). We understand that the near-term funding gap between the President's FY08 request for the Census Bureau and the level provided by the Continuing Resolution is over \$59 million. Between October 1 and November 16, the Census Bureau will be operating with less than 62 percent of its needed program funding, as reflected in the President's budget request.

This shortfall is of very grave concern, because current funding is not adequate to keep the 2008 Census Dress Rehearsal and the 2007 Economic Census on track. Delays in preparations for either census could have serious, adverse consequences for accuracy, cost, and the timely availability of population and economic data that drive constitutional requirements and fiscal policy. Therefore, we strongly urge you to take whatever steps are necessary — including the transfer of funds from elsewhere in the Commerce Department, and collaboration with OMB and Congress — to ensure that the Census Bureau receives as much additional funding as possible, as soon as possible, to reduce or close this large gap.

As the official with authority over the Census Bureau, you know that vital spending commitments must be made this month to ensure that the 2008 Dress Rehearsal fully tests the methods needed to bring about a fair and accurate 2010 Census. These spending commitments cover the master address and geography files, procurement of handheld computers to replace outmoded and expensive paper forms in the door-to-door process, Dress Rehearsal hiring and training, and census outreach programs. At this moment, the inability of the Census Bureau to pay Harris Corp. to continue developing the software for the handheld computers may be resulting in the layoff of Harris engineers. With an immovable census date of April 1, 2010, FY08 decision and action points are time-sensitive; there is very little room for delay before significant problems appear.

Failure to fully evaluate the integrated 2010 census design in the Dress Rehearsal will jeopardize the accuracy of the 2010 count and likely lead to substantially increased costs. Reduced accuracy, in turn, will adversely affect the apportionment and redistricting of legislative seats upon which our nation's democracy rests; the distribution of over \$300 billion annually in federal funds, as well as state and local planning for social services; and economic policy and investment, for the nation as a whole down to the smallest community.

The budget shortfall also is negatively affecting preparations for the 2007 Economic Census, the survey which provides the statistical foundation for the analytic models, tools, and indicators that guide the nation's economic policy as conducted by the Federal Reserve, the Treasury Department, the Commerce Department, and other federal entities. Delays could harm the completeness, accuracy, and timeliness of this critical effort.

In light of the potential for substantial and irreversible damage to vital Census Bureau programs, we request that you make every effort to provide the Census Bureau with additional funding to cover the shortfall, as soon as possible. First, we ask that you immediately transfer Commerce Department funds to the Census Bureau up to the limits allowed under H.J. Res 52 (per P.L. 110-5 Fiscal Year 2007 Full-Year Continuing Resolution, Section 203, General Provisions—Department of Commerce). We understand that there is \$7 million available for transfer.

Second, as your transfer authority is limited relative to Census Bureau needs, we urge you to actively work with OMB and Congress to identify additional funds to cover the gap. Options for consideration include amending H.J. Res. 52 to loosen restrictions on your current transfer authority or provide an exception for the Census Bureau.

In addition, to ensure there is no further damage to preparations for Census 2010, we ask that you request an exception for the Census Bureau's budget in any additional Continuing Resolutions, should they be necessary.

We thank you for your attention to this matter and your understanding that time is of the essence.

Sincerely,

American Sociological Association

Asian American Justice Center

Association of Population Centers

Consortium of Social Science
Associations

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National Association of Counties

National Association of Latino
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