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## **Key House Committee Poised to Cut Census Bureau Budget By 25%; 2012 Economic Census, 2020 Census Planning in Danger of Elimination**

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. House Appropriations Committee could act as early as tomorrow to slash the Census Bureau budget by 25 percent below FY 2011 spending levels. The reduction — \$169 million below the President's request for FY2012 and \$295 million below the FY2011 allocation — would likely force the Bureau to make one of two stark choices: eliminate the 2012 Economic Census (conducted every five years), or abandon all or most early research and planning for the 2020 Census, as well as some important final 2010 decennial census activities.

The final Census 2010 activities that might be cut include a program, called Count Question Resolution, for local government officials to challenge their 2010 population counts, as well as the Census Coverage Measurement process, which produces scientific estimates of the undercount and overcount in the last census. Cities of all sizes that have filed challenges or are considering doing so include New York, Houston, St. Louis, Atlanta, Jersey City, San Jose, CA, and Tyler, TX.

"The subcommittee mark for the Census Bureau will likely compel the agency to cut core programs. The cut of \$169 million from the President's request for Periodic Censuses and Programs puts in doubt the Census Bureau's ability to conduct the 2012 Quinquennial Economic Census, required by the Census Act," declared a letter signed by 38 organizations and delivered to the House Appropriations Committee. "The Economic Census is the cornerstone of the nation's economic statistics programs, providing core information on virtually all non-farm businesses and related data on business expenditures, commodity flows, and minority and women-owned businesses. It is a fundamental building block of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and national income and product accounts. Fiscal Year 2012 is the third year of the six-year 2012 Economic Census funding cycle. Abandoning plans for this important measurement of economic activity across diverse sectors would be foolhardy at a time when data are an essential component of the roadmap to economic recovery and progress and job creation."

Alternatively, the Census Bureau might be forced to discontinue early research and planning for the 2020 Census, thereby foregoing opportunities to develop new methods that will yield significant cost savings for the next decennial enumeration. "For example, continuous updating of the Master Address File throughout the decade — a proposed new initiative — would save hundreds of millions of dollars alone by eliminating the need for comprehensive pre-census address canvassing in 2019," the stakeholder organizations, representing a wide range of economic and social sectors, wrote to lawmakers.

Other core programs potentially affected include the American Community Survey (ACS), the seminal source of annual socio-economic and demographic data about the nation used by decision-makers in the private sector and at all levels of government to allocate limited resources. For FY 2012, the Bureau requested \$5 million to test innovations in the American Community Survey, such as an Internet response option, that will contribute substantially to controlling future decennial census costs.

"We believe the Subcommittee's recommendation of \$856 million, which is 25 percent below the Census Bureau's FY 2011 spending level, puts vital data collection programs in jeopardy and will cripple the agency's ability to achieve significant savings in the future through innovative methods and greater use of technology," said the letter.

The Obama Administration's original budget request of \$1.025 billion was already a substantial reduction from the previous year. Further, the bureau just announced that it was permanently closing six of its 12 regional offices, reducing costs by an estimated \$15 to \$18 million per year, beginning in 2014.

The letter was signed by 38 organizations, including:

American Association of People with Disabilities  
American Statistical Association  
Association of Public Data Users  
Japanese American Citizens League  
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
Moving Forward Gulf Coast Inc.  
National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO)  
Educational Fund  
National Education Association  
Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA)  
Population Association of America

A full copy of the congressional letter is posted online at:  
[http://www.thecensusproject.org/letters/HouseCJS\\_GroupSignOn.pdf](http://www.thecensusproject.org/letters/HouseCJS_GroupSignOn.pdf).

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