



March 28, 2006

The Honorable Frank Wolf  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Science, State, Justice, and Commerce  
Committee on Appropriations  
H-309 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Wolf:

We are writing to express our strong support for the President's fiscal year 2007 budget request for **2010 census planning and the American Community Survey (ACS)**, as well as for other important Census Bureau programs. Although the decennial count is just three years away, the proposed \$878.2 million funding level is less than one percent above the President's fiscal year 2006 request – a modest increase at such a significant point in the census cycle.

The undersigned organizations have come together under the umbrella of The Census Project, to educate policymakers and the public about the importance of an accurate and comprehensive census. We represent a wide range of stakeholders who rely on census data to better understand and serve our nation's diverse population and communities.

2007 is a pivotal year for the census and several other data programs. *The Administration's proposed funding level for the agency represents, in our view, the minimum needed to ensure effective preparations for the decennial count and comprehensive data collection in the American Community Survey.* Final preparations for the 2007 Economic Census and Census of Governments also take place next year. The Economic Census 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.

In addition, we note with concern the President's proposal to terminate the Survey of Income and Program Participation before the Census Bureau has developed an alternative program for measuring critical income, wealth, and program dynamics.

### **2010 Census: From Planning to Preparation in 2007**

2007 is an especially important year in the decennial census cycle, as activities shift from the planning stage to preparations for the 2010 count. From questionnaire content, to technical infrastructure, to address lists and maps, the Census Bureau must make final design decisions, pull together the components of the enumeration, and begin laying the groundwork for the conduct of the census.

By law, the Census Bureau must submit proposed topics for the census to Congress by April 1, 2007. Content tests for both the decennial census short form and the related American Community Survey are taking place this year; the Census Bureau will evaluate the tests and finalize the content in the first half of fiscal year 2007. (For example, the Bureau is testing several versions of the race and Hispanic origin questions and a possible ancestry question.)

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In 2007, the Census Bureau will prepare for the 2008 Census Dress Rehearsal, a dry-run of the full census process. The dress rehearsal in San Joaquin County, CA, and several North Carolina counties 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.

The census relies on a vast, complex technological infrastructure, and the Census Bureau must work with its contracting partners in 2007 to develop the framework for field data collection and data processing, both for the dress rehearsal and the census itself. A significant portion of the requested increase for 2010 census planning will fund contract management and development activities for Field Data Collection Automation and the Decennial Response Integration System. The Census Bureau has also requested funds to update the TIGER digital mapping system in 690 counties, completing a modernization project that will help census takers locate and enumerate households correctly.

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 and equipping census takers with hand-held computers, will save millions of dollars in the long run and will help ensure a more accurate count in 2010 by reducing operational risk.

### **Census Reengineering and the American Community Survey**

The ACS is one of the most prudent investments the government can make in sound planning and program development and evaluation. Congress, state and local governments, businesses, and community service providers will be able to identify emerging needs and to target solutions far more accurately than they could with census long form data.

ACS data will help public and private sector policy-makers track and analyze important trends, such as growing school-age and senior citizen populations, incidence of poverty, availability of affordable housing, households needing language assistance, and the needs of veterans. The relatively modest investment in this annual survey will allow legislators to target more effectively hundreds of billions of dollars in program funds, and businesses to invest trillions of dollars more prudently, for the betterment of all communities.

The Census Bureau has requested \$180 million for the ACS in 2007. This amount will ensure the uninterrupted collection of essential information from households and group quarters, moving the survey closer to its goal of producing annual small area data after the first five years of nationwide implementation. Inadequate funding could force the Census Bureau to drop group quarters coverage or reduce sample size, placing a complete transition from the census long form in jeopardy.

**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 Science-Justice-Commerce appropriations account.**

Thank you for your consideration of our views and for your support of adequate funding for important Census Bureau activities.

Sincerely,

Sally T. Hillsman, Ph.D., Executive Officer  
American Sociological Association

Helen Samhan, Executive Director  
Arab American Institute Foundation

Karen Narasaki, President and Executive Director  
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Dr. Alberto Palloni, President  
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William P. Butz, President  
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Larry Jones, Deputy Director  
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