

CENSUS 2010 PREPARATIONS THREATENED: FY08 CR COULD DERAIL ACCURATE CENSUS

- The Fiscal Year 2008 (FY08) Continuing Resolution (CR), funding the Federal government until November 16, does not include an exemption for the Census Bureau, despite frequent warnings from Census officials this year that they would need an exemption from any CR to keep 2010 Census preparations on schedule.
- For FY08, the Administration requested a 38.5 percent funding increase for the Census Bureau. The traditional funding “ramp-up” requires nearly 50 percent more money for final decennial census tests and crucial groundwork, including the 2008 Census Dress Rehearsal—the only dry run of the 2010 census.
- However, under the current CR, the agency is held to spending at the FY 2007 funding level. The severe shortage of money, even in the short term, is forcing the Census Bureau to seriously curtail or cancel key preparations for the population count.
- Unlike most other federal programs, census preparations cannot be delayed without putting the accuracy of the constitutionally mandated population count at risk. The census must start early in 2010, and all preparations take a certain amount of time to complete in advance. For example, it takes a full year to print and address 130 million census forms! Census workers must canvass every block and road in the country to verify addresses. Cities and towns must review preliminary address lists and make any corrections before block canvassing can begin. Each operation must be done on time and thoroughly to ensure the best count possible in 2010.
- Unless the Census Bureau receives an infusion of money it was counting on to continue planned census preparations on schedule, either before the CR expires or shortly thereafter, the agency will have to take some or all of these immediate steps:
 - **Cancel testing of new handheld computers in the 2008 Dress Rehearsal**
These promising but new devices must be tested in the Dress Rehearsal if they are to be used in the 2010 Census. Without them, the Bureau must resort to a paper-based census, which would *increase the overall cost of the census by \$1.5 billion*. 400 contract employees involved in developing the handheld computers have already been laid off as a result of the CR, calling into question the future of this major census contract.
 - **Curtail or Cancel Census Dress Rehearsal**
Before the end of the year, hiring and training for the Dress Rehearsal must be completed to guarantee that operations are ready to launch in March 2008. If the agency cannot hire and adequately train enough temporary census workers, it may be forced to seriously curtail or cancel the dress rehearsal. One test on the chopping block involves group quarters at Fort Bragg Military Base in North Carolina—the only opportunity to evaluate plans for an accurate count of military personnel and other so-called “group quarters,” such as college dorms.
 - **Delay crucial address list updating by counties, cities, and towns**
Delayed implementation of the Local Update of Census Addresses program will impede the ability of states, cities, counties and towns to fully verify the Bureau’s street-by-street address lists and ensure that no housing units are missed.

- **Postpone Plans for the 2007 Economic Census**
The Economic Census, scheduled to start in December, provides a detailed picture of the Nation's economy every five years, guiding economic policy and decision-making at every level. Delay in final preparations could harm the completeness, accuracy, and timeliness of this critical fiscal information source.
- Prior to Census 2000, Congress gave the Census Bureau several exemptions from any flat-line funding requirements of Continuing Resolutions. Congress and the Administration should work together to provide the Bureau with the resources it needs to conduct an accurate 2010 Census –an ambitious effort that requires wise investments in 2008.
- Some possible solutions to the problem include:
 - Encouraging the Department of Commerce and the Office of Management and Budget to use existing legal authorities to transfer funds to the Census Bureau.
 - Enacting an amendment to the current CR, P.L. 110-92, to provide an immediate exception for the Census Bureau.
 - Ensuring any future CRs, should they be necessary, include an exemption for the Census Bureau.