



November 30, 2016

Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-221 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator McConnell and Senator Reid:

We are writing to urge your support for an **anomaly for the U.S. Census Bureau in the second Fiscal year 2017 Continuing Resolution**. The Obama Administration has requested an annual spend rate of \$1.192 billion through the second fiscal quarter for activities within the Periodic Censuses and Programs account, which includes the 2020 Census and ongoing American Community Survey (ACS), the 2017 Economic Census, and the enterprise-wide IT system for data collection and tabulation (CEDCaP).

Our organizations participate in the Census Project (www.thecensusproject.org), a broad-based, nonpartisan group of stakeholders who rely on accurate, timely, and comprehensive Census Bureau data for decision-making and resource allocation in virtually every facet of American society.¹ We cannot overstate the importance of census and ACS data to the work we all do.

With an end-to-end readiness test for the 2020 Census only a year away, the Census Bureau's funding ramp-up must continue in order to carry out planning and preparations thoroughly and on schedule. Maintaining the agency's budget at FY2016 levels into the second fiscal quarter will jeopardize rigorous testing of IT systems before deployment in the 2018 "dry run," as well as final testing of new methods and operations designed to reduce costs by billions of dollars while maintaining census accuracy. A funding anomaly in the second Continuing Resolution is essential for the reasons set forth below.

First, we recognize that many federal programs must adjust their plans and schedules when faced with short-term flat funding and uncertain long-term funding under a Continuing Resolution. *The decennial census, however, is unique among federal responsibilities, both in purpose and structure.* Of primary importance, the Constitution requires a count every 10 years of every person living in the United States. The Census Bureau must conduct the enumeration on time and get the count right, to advance

¹ Our coalition includes representatives from virtually every economic and social sector, including business and industry; state, local, and tribal governments; transportation; housing; education; labor; rural economic development; health care; civil rights; and nonprofit agencies helping low-income families and children, the elderly, people with disabilities, veterans, and immigrants and refugees.

equality of political representation under Article I and the Fourteenth Amendment. Therefore, it is appropriate to assign a higher level of importance to the Census Bureau's short term funding needs.

Second, the census is the nation's largest, most complex peacetime mobilization. The unique cyclical nature of the enumeration requires a steady progression from early research and testing, to planning and development, to preparation and implementation. *Funding for the census must increase steadily in the second half of each decade*, to accommodate key field tests, operational and IT development, and on-the-ground preparations.

In FY2017, the Census Bureau must submit the 2020 Census and ACS topics to Congress (required by law); begin the Local Update of Census Addresses program to incorporate address and geographic information from states and localities (required by law); complete evaluation of revisions to the 2020 Census questionnaire, based on results from the 2015 National Content Test; develop the Integrated Communications Campaign plan; launch the Partnership Program; and conduct a national test of Internet response refinements and a new telephone assistance system. The Bureau must finalize the 2020 Census design in time for the 2018 End-to-End Readiness Test.

The Census Bureau cannot implement these activities in a comprehensive and timely way without a funding increase in FY2017, nor can it make up for lost time and compensate for reduced scope of final tests at this point in the decennial census cycle. Insufficient funding could lead to cost overruns in IT system development and abandonment of new, cost-saving methods. Failure to establish full confidence in operations and systems before deployment in the census could jeopardize an accurate count of all residents, especially those at greater risk of undercounting, such as rural and low-income households, young children, and people of color, including American Indians on reservations and tribal lands. These outcomes are not acceptable or prudent for a constitutionally required government function.

Finally, the quality of other vital programs in the Periodic Censuses and Programs account is at risk without a funding anomaly in the second quarter of FY2017. *The Census Bureau should not be forced to choose between applying budget cuts to a constitutionally required activity (the 2020 Census) or to the ACS and 2017 Economic Census, both of which provide irreplaceable, granular data that inform, directly or indirectly, most policy and investment decisions in the public and private sectors.* Indeed, the Senate Appropriations Committee noted in its report accompanying the FY2017 Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bill (S. Rept. 114-239):

“[The] ACS is often the primary or only source of data available to States, localities, and Federal agencies that need adequate information on a wide range of topics, including the needs of veterans, retirees, and families with school-age children, in order to reliably serve those communities. The ACS is especially important to Americans who live in small towns and rural areas, as this survey often provides the only reliable and consistent source of information about these communities.”

We believe the threat to a fair and accurate census and high-quality ACS that continued flat-funding poses is not a risk this nation and our democratic system of governance can afford to take. We urge you to include a funding anomaly for the Census Bureau at the level the Administration requested in the second FY2017 Continuing Resolution, to continue robust planning for a cost-effective 2020 Census and preserve other essential data programs.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns. Please feel free to contact Census Project Co-Director Mary Jo Hoeksema at <maryjo@popassoc.org> with any questions.

Sincerely,

The Honorable Kenneth Prewitt, Director, U.S. Census Bureau (1998-2001)
 Activists With A Purpose Plus – Grenada, MS
 American Association for Public Opinion Research
 American Association of University Women (AAUW)
 American Federation of Teachers
 American Sociological Association
 American Statistical Association
 American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
 Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)
 Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
 Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum
 Association of Academic Survey Research Organizations
 Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations
 Association of Population Centers
 Association of Public Data Users
 Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good
 Center for Asian Pacific American Women
 City of Charlotte, NC Research and Analytics Program
 Conference of Major Superiors of Men
 Consortium of Social Science Associations
 Council for Community and Economic Research
 Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement
 Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics
 Decision Demographics – Arlington, VA
 Hmong American Partnership (HAP)
 Hmong National Development, Inc. (HND)
 International City/County Management Association (ICMA)
 Laotian American National Alliance
 MACS 2020 - Minnesotans for the American Community Survey and 2020 Census
 Marketing Research Association
 Midwest Political Science Association
 NAACP
 NALEO Educational Fund
 National Apartment Association
 National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA)
 National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
 National Association for Business Economics
 National Association of Home Builders
 National Association of REALTORS®
 National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development
 National Coalition on Black Civic Participation
 National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)
 National Council of Jewish Women

National Multifamily Housing Council
National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance (NQAPIA)
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Nielsen
OCA – Asian Pacific American Advocates
Partnership for America's Children
Population Association of America
Prison Policy Initiative
Research Advisory Services, Inc. – Phoenix, AZ
RLS Demographics – Albany, NY
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
Southeast Michigan Census Council
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
The U.S. Conference of Mayors
UNITED SIKHS