



Brookings Briefing on the Census
The Road to the 2010 Census:
Implications for Apportionment, Redistricting, and the Economy
April 7, 2006

Introductory Remarks – Andrew Reamer, Deputy Director, Urban Markets Initiative

Greetings, I'm Andrew Reamer with the Urban Markets Initiative of The Brookings Institution, and I want to welcome you all to this first of three Brookings Briefings on the Census. This session is titled "The Road to the 2010 Census: Implications for Apportionment, Redistricting, and the Economy." I'll make a few opening remarks, ask for words of welcome from our Congressional hosts, walk through today's agenda, and then turn to our distinguished moderator of the first panel, the Chief Statistician of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, Katherine Wallman.

In this 21st century Knowledge Economy, the functioning of our nation is based on statistics—about people, about businesses, about natural resources, about physical infrastructure, about all the elements that make up a complex, post-industrial society. We have a capitalist economy and a representative democracy. The strength of our capitalism depends on the effective allocation of economic resources. And the strength of our representative democracy relies on the equitable geographic distribution of political power. The foundation of effective resource allocation and equitable representation is accurate numbers.

Most industrialized nations have one central statistical agency. The United States does not. Rather, over the decades our representatives in Congress have created a myriad of statistical organizations and programs to carry out a variety of specific purposes. While we do not have one central statistical agency, we do have a fundamental one on which the statistical system depends—the Census Bureau.

The task which Congress gives to the Census Bureau is straightforward—at regular intervals, produce accurate statistics on America's residents and businesses, disaggregated at meaningful levels of geography. In particular, Congress has delegated to the Census Bureau what some would call a sacred task, enshrined in the Constitution, to carry out a full and complete count of the residents of the United States every ten years, on the basis of which seats in the House of Representatives are to be apportioned among the states.

While the Constitutional Convention in the 18th century and Congresses over time have framed the mission of the Census Bureau, the role of the Bureau in our economy and democracy is not fully appreciated by all Members of Congress and by the public at large. This is understandable. Members have many things on their minds, the world of numbers is arcane and not politically sexy, and the regularity and ubiquity of Census data, like plumbing and other unseen utilities, tends to lull us into taking them for granted.

As you may or may not know, last year, the Census Bureau budget came very close to being cut back by about \$85 million, a cut that would have been sufficient to cause the elimination and downgrading of key statistical efforts and reduce the availability and accuracy of the numbers needed by business and government, including Congress itself. Through the efforts of a variety of people in this room and concerned Congressional Members in both houses and across both sides of the aisle,

an adequate budget was passed. But this event was a wake-up call for those of us who appreciate the importance of the Bureau and its work, and understand the high return to the nation that a relatively modest investment in the statistical system can bring. Which brings us to today.

At the invitation of John Cuaderes, executive director of the House Subcommittee on Federalism and the Census, The Brookings Institution is holding a series of three briefings on Capitol Hill on Census population statistics—one on the 2010 Census, one on the American Community Survey, and one on intercensal population estimates—with three purposes in mind. The first is to help Congressional staff and nongovernmental organizations understand the extent to which our economy and democracy rely on these data. The second is to provide an opportunity for this audience to understand the steps necessary to produce these data and an opportunity to provide feedback to the Census Bureau and the House Subcommittee regarding how these steps are carried out. The third purpose is to provide a forum in which nongovernmental organizations can discuss ways in which they can continue to educate Members of Congress outside of these briefings.

We start off the series with a focus on the one statistical program mandated by the Constitution, the Decennial Census. The Census Bureau is directed to count every single resident of the U.S. These data, as noted, are used for the purposes of apportionment. They have other fundamental uses as well. They are used for the purposes of redrawing Congressional, state, and local legislative districts. They are the basis for the allocation of billions of federal dollars annually. And they determine how trillions of dollars in business investments will be spent.

We are enormously gratified with the capacity turnout for today's event to explore the importance of the Decennial Census and the steps needed to produce an accurate one. We have Congressional staff from both houses and both sides of the aisle, national associations representing key constituencies that depend on the Decennial Census, such as local governments, business organizations, and various demographic groups, we also have federal agencies, research institutions, the National Academy of Sciences, and the press.

Before reviewing the agenda, I'll ask John Cuaderes, staff director for the House Subcommittee on Federalism and the Census, to give a few words of welcome. We are here at John's invitation, and very much appreciate that. John's welcome will be followed by one from Mark Stephenson, professional staff member for the minority on the House Government Reform Committee.

Today's session has three parts. The opening session, chaired by Katherine Wallman, starts with two presentations—from the Census Bureau's Jay Waite, who oversees the 2010 Census, and Joe Salvo, chief of NYC's Population Division—on the steps to be taken between here and 2010 to produce an accurate population count. Then we'll hear presentations from Cathy McCully from the Census Data Redistricting Office and Michael Carliner from the National Association of Home Builders on why accurate counts are important. We'll give Congressional staff, many of whom are not as immersed in this as a lot of us, a chance to ask clarifying questions. After a break, we'll come back to an overview from John Cuaderes on Congress's role and process regarding the Decennial Census. We'll then open the floor to all for a conversation as in-depth as you want with Jay Waite regarding Census plans and methods and with John and Mark regarding the Congressional role.

We will end with a discussion about how nongovernmental organizations seeking an accurate population count can better inform Congress about the high return on investment in the Decennial Census.

Katherine Wallman and her small staff comprise the OMB Statistical Policy Office that guides the complex, idiosyncratic collection of over 70 agencies we call the federal statistical system. This office represents all of us, the data users of America, as it attempts to review and coordinate the activities of this myriad of federal statistical agencies, assist OMB in the development of the President's budget for these agencies, and inform Congress as required by law. If I were to create a map of the network of connections and relationships that keep this system functioning, at the center would be Katherine Wallman, Chief Statistician of the United States and cat herder par excellence.

Panel 1: An Accurate 2010 Census: How Does the Census Get There from Here? Why Should Congress Care?

Introductory Remarks – Katherine K. Wallman, Chief Statistician, Statistical Policy Office, Office of Management and Budget

Katherine Wallman, Chief Statistician of the United States, opened the first panel by describing the Census as a “great civic event” in the United States – “Each decennial census is important to every single person in the country and it’s important for all to *participate* in the census.” Ms. Wallman cited three critical ways in which the decennial census numbers affect the functioning of the U.S. democracy and economy -

- Congressional apportionment
- Federal funds allocation - Census provides the population counts for the distribution of over \$200 billion in federal funds
- A key ingredient in the many things that government, businesses, and researchers do, such as public policy, local planning, household surveys and other forms of research, and business location decisions.

Ms. Wallman pointed out that the decennial census is the only source of information on how many people live in census tracts and block groups. She noted that OMB and the Commerce Department support a re-engineered 2010 census (with the “long form” now administered every year as the American Community Survey) because it can provide better returns with less burden on respondents.

Getting There from Here – Preston Jay Waite, Associate Director for the Decennial Census, U.S. Census Bureau

Jay Waite reviewed the necessary planning and operational processes for producing an accurate 2010 census¹, the components of the re-engineered 2010 census (i.e., the American Community Survey and the MAF/TIGER enhancements), and how the re-engineered 2010 Census will produce a more accurate population count.

Importance of Accuracy and Consistency

¹ Planning and operations timeline for the 2010 Census, see: http://www.brookings.edu/metro/umi/events/20060407_2010timeline.pdf

Mr. Waite discussed the enormous methodological and logistical undertaking for counting “everyone, only once, in the right place.” To do this correctly, the Bureau must have adequate time and resources to plan and test the accuracy and consistency of its methods and procedures. Mr. Waite pointed out that the accuracy of the decennial census numbers affect the functioning of democratic process – “The census counts are the final word on how many congressional delegates a state gets and strongly influences how district lines can be drawn within that state.” To illustrate the real world implications of the decennial count, he noted that in 2000, Utah lost a seat in the House of Representative to North Carolina by less than 1,000 residents.

Mr. Waite provided an overview of the data collection process. The decennial census process is wholly dependent on the completeness of the Bureau’s Master Address File (MAF). The MAF is constructed through a variety of methods, including United States Postal Service (USPS) household lists, the Bureau’s Local Update of Census Address (LUCA) program that enlists the help of local governments to review and edit the MAF, and, a year before Census day, an on-site address walk to determine if there are any housing units—basement apartments, garage apartments, recent new developments – that may have been missed.

The Bureau’s primary data collection process is through the mailout/mailback process. The Bureau has to print millions of questionnaires. For households where addresses are uncertain or for physically difficult places to reach, the questionnaires are hand-delivered. For households that do not mail back the questionnaire, the Bureau must go back in person to collect the information, a costly process.

Mr. Waite stated “In some ways it’s simple, we have to count everyone, only once, in the right place.” But, he pointed out, for some populations – e.g. students, children of divorced parents, nursing home residents – the location of the “permanent” residence may be unclear. For example, parents of college students may think their children live with them, while, technically, the Census considers the students’ permanent residence to be at school.

Mr. Waite also pointed out that the content of the questionnaire may affect the accuracy of the data. In 2000, the Bureau encountered problems with the wording of the Hispanic question, which resulted in an undercount of Dominican residents in New York City. This underscores the need for the Bureau to have adequate time and resources to test the content of the survey well in advance of Census day.

Once the content of the questionnaire and method for collection has been planned and tested, the Bureau must hire and train hundreds of thousands of people to carry out the various tasks necessary to take the census. For Census 2000, the Bureau hired 860,000 people and provided them with 3-4 days of training.

Why re-engineer the decennial census process? Mr. Waite remarked that, while the 2000 census was a success, with less than an 0.5% overcount, it is still critical for the Bureau to take steps to improve coverage, produce more timely data, improve geographic coding, and reduce costs through computerization and automation. The ACS, which is replacing the decennial long form, will produce data every year rather than once in 10 years – “If you live in a community where nothing has changed in the last 10 years, then the long form is an ideal data instrument,” but this is not the case for the majority of America. Because the ACS was in the field prior to and after Hurricane Katrina, the Bureau will have good data on the affected areas in 2004-06. Mr. Waite also noted that the

separation of the long form from the short form will improve the accuracy of the population count by allowing Census staff to focus solely on counting the nation's people.

Producing an Accurate Count: A Local View – Joseph Salvo, Director, Population Division, New York City Department of City Planning

J. Salvo's presentation is available at:

http://www.brookings.edu/metro/umi/events/20060407_salvo.pdf

Dr. Salvo, Director, Population Division, New York City Department of Planning, discussed the need for new data collection methods for neighborhoods in which the Census Bureau's primary method of data collection (mail out/mail back) is inadequate. Dr. Salvo noted that many "small multi-unit buildings" (typically with two to six housing units) lack traditional "city-style" addresses (i.e. address number, street name, and apartment number). As a result, these types of housing units are often inaccurately listed in the MAF and missed in the population count. Dr. Salvo indicated that problematic multi-unit buildings exist in small, medium, and large communities all over the country. They are especially prevalent in areas with rising housing costs and significant immigrant populations. "If you aren't on the address list, I tell folks, you don't exist to the Census Bureau." This problem has actually been around for several decades, but received increased attention in Census 2000.

How is accuracy compromised? Dr. Salvo pointed out that the lack of an exact address confuses the Bureau because it:

- cannot make accurate distinctions between apartments;
- cannot mail forms to these apartments with any confidence that they will reach the occupants;
- cannot follow-up on them in an accurate fashion because of confusion over where the apartment is located; and
- has difficulty sorting out what households were and were not enumerated for the purposes of evaluating the accuracy of the census.

Dr. Salvo identified approaches by which the Census Bureau can address this problem, particularly: encouraging local governments to actively use LUCA to improve MAF accuracy; identify those neighborhoods around the U.S. with a concentration of units without city-style addresses; and employ Update/Enumerate, where a Census field worker with an address list in hand checks the address, fixes the list when necessary, and then enumerates the household on the spot.

Dr. Salvo credited the Bureau with acknowledging the problem and devising a set of procedures to make the census more accurate, including Update/Enumerate. He emphasized that while the Bureau has the expertise to deal with this problem, it also needs adequate resources, as Update/Enumerate is labor-intensive and therefore, expensive. Dr. Salvo said that "the Census Bureau is now at a critical juncture," as it needs to move from testing to implementation of Update/Enumerate. He concluded by noting that the cost of inaction would be high – inaccurate counts and inequitable distribution of funds to local governments.

Apportionment and Redistricting – Cathy McCully, Chief, Census Redistricting Data Office, U.S. Census Bureau

Ms. McCully, Chief, Census Redistricting Data Office, discussed the Census Bureau’s on-going working relationship with the states, and the critical role states play in helping the Census Bureau produce accurate and timely census redistricting data files. Ms. McCully noted that her office was created in accordance with P.L. 94-171 (1975) to enable states to comply with federal laws and court decisions that mandate the drawing of state and local legislative districts consistent with “one person, one vote.” Since 1980, the Census Bureau has actively worked with the states to develop what are known as the redistricting, or PL 94-171, data files. After each decennial census, the Bureau conducts an evaluation of its efforts to improve on its process.

Ms. McCully discussed the plan for preparing PL 94-171 Redistricting Data for the 2010 Census. This plan was developed through consultation with legislative and executive officials in the states who have provided official notice of their concerns, issues, and needs. Ms. McCully stated that the Census Bureau treats this review as a high priority. One example is the development of the Census Bureau’s TIGER database. After the 1980 census and subsequent redistricting litigation, states informed the Census Bureau they needed block level data. The Census Bureau took a plan to develop TIGER for census 2000 and sped it up in order to successfully provide nationwide block numbering for the 1990 Census.

After Census 2000, one of the states’ recommendations was for the Census Bureau to visit the states to provide an overview of the Bureau’s P.L. 94-171 plans and explain where state and local participation would be of benefit. Ms. McCully said that the Census Bureau has followed this recommendation, visiting 38 states to date, with the intent to visit the balance. During each visit, Census Bureau staff meets with staff from the Governor’s and Secretary of State’s offices, legislative leaders and staff, and state demographers and GIS experts. Conversations include not only the Redistricting Program, but also, ways in which states can improve the MAF through LUCA and other means. In several states, the Census Bureau was invited back to provide the same information to county elections officials.

Ms. McCully pointed out that active state participation in the decennial census does result in more accurate counts. In 2000, a number of state legislatures appropriated state funds to support local government participation in LUCA. The state of Georgia, she noted, believes that it received two new seats in the apportionment process, rather than one, because of their active support of local LUCA partnerships with the Census Bureau.

Ms. McCully indicated that the introduction of the American Community Survey will improve the quality of the short form data from which the redistricting dataset is compiled. She says she emphasizes to states that the ACS will better support compliance with the Voting Rights Act with regard to language assistance provisions (section 203).

The five phases of the Redistricting Data Program for 2010 are:

- Phase 1—collection of state legislative district plans and the official visits (2005-07)
- Phase 2—collection of voting district plans and suggestions to the census block inventory (2008-09)

- Phase 3—delivery of P.L. 94-171 data no later than April 1, 2011, as required by law (2010-11)
- Phase 4—collection of new congressional/state legislative district plans, and efforts related to compliance with the Voting Rights Act (2012-13)
- Phase 5—evaluation of the 2010 Census and the development of a planning document for the 2020 Census (2012-14)

Ms. McCully stated that the Census Bureau will be concluding the first phase in December 2006 with the release of state legislative district data (per Census 2000 long form) for 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Perhaps more importantly, the Census Bureau also will produce ACS data profiles for congressional and state legislative districts as we approach the next census. The ACS data will allow elected officials, for the first time, to have a glimpse of the demographic make-up their current districts before the redistricting dataset arrives and redistricting begins.

Ms. McCully emphasized the special role of her office is maintaining open communications between the states and the Census Bureau, particularly through the National Conference of State Legislatures. Information on the Redistricting Data program is available at <http://www.census.gov/rdo/>. Ms. McCully indicated that her office is soliciting comments on how to make the site more useful to user needs.

The Census and Business Decision-Making – Michael Carliner, Staff Vice President for Economics, National Association of Home Builders

Michael Carliner, Staff Vice President for Economics, National Association of Home Builders, discussed the uses of the Census data by both the private and public sector. Dr. Carliner remarked that, in order to determine where to build housing, home builders need data on changes in population and income; where workers live and work; and areas of second home growth. Census data also are used by local governments to determine zoning decisions and the need for local services and infrastructure (water, sewer, schools), all of which affects where homes can be built. Dr. Carliner noted that home builders have been blocked from adding housing because “the community didn’t plan for sufficient infrastructure.”

Dr. Carliner also pointed out that while small area census data have been available for decades, local governments have not been able to easily access this information until recently. “We now have the information technology tools to access the information, and no longer need to go to the local federal office to pull up numbers on microfiche and copy and hand tally numbers. To take full advantage of these tools, so that we can make this economy more productive, we need to have accurate data from the census.”

Feedback to the Census Bureau and the Congress - Discussion

Opening the discussion, John Cuaderes, Staff Director for the Subcommittee on Federalism and the Census, stated that the decennial census is critical for the functioning of the U.S. democracy. He noted that the decennial census is mandated by the Constitution, an Article 1 function. Mr. Cuaderes asserted that it is incumbent on Congress to see that there is an accurate census. He noted that the

Subcommittee's role is provide oversight of this important program, including seeing that the Census Bureau is able to carry out planning and testing in a timely manner well prior to Census day.

Following Mr. Cuaderes's remarks, Mr. Waite was asked by Dr. Reamer to discuss where the Bureau currently is on the 2010 Census timeline

http://www.brookings.edu/metro/umi/events/20060407_2010timeline.pdf. Mr. Waite stated the Census Bureau is currently doing the following:

- Testing and planning for the dress rehearsal in 2008 in Fayetteville, North Carolina and Stockton, California
- Developing the final questionnaire for 2010
- Starting LUCA in August, 2007
- Realigning all counties for GPS/TIGER in 2006
- Issuing a \$600 million contract for handheld devices.

Question & Answer

Q: (Bill O'Hare, Annie E. Casey Foundation) I've heard the argument that moving to the ACS will improve the accuracy and credibility of long form type data. Do you have the evidence of this?

A: (Waite)

- The mailback response rate for the short form is ten percentage points higher than for the long form
- Management will be easier because Census Bureau staff and enumerators will only need to care for a short form in 2010

Q: (Carol Wayman, CFED) Who's focused on making the data useful for users on a KnowledgePlex type platform?

A: Census offers American FactFinder to start your investigation, then you can go to any of the several companies that repackage and resell the data.

Q: Over the last 10 years, there's been a growing Asian population. What have we learned in respect to the languages the census form is available in? And what are we doing to address it?

A: We print Census forms in Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, and Tagalog. We also have questionnaire assistance centers with access to guides with 49 languages. You can lay the guide over the form and then mark the questions. For nonresponse follow up, we have local field staff who are multilingual and speak the languages appropriate to the area where they are working.

Q: (O'Hare to Cuaderes) Is your committee thinking about how to address the need to shift funding formulas from reliance on long form data to reliance on the ACS?

A: (Cuaderes) We plan to work with the relevant committees to address places how to adjust the funding formulas. We are considering, in one fell swoop, looking at all the programs that need to move their formulation from long form to ACS. Relying on ACS is fairer to communities that now wait years for a count that accurately affects the characteristics of the population in order to "get what the federal government owes them."

(Andrew Reamer to Jackie Byers, National Association of Counties) What does NACo expect from LUCA, what would it like to see?

Q: (Byers) Thanks. LUCA is critical. In 2000, there were difficulties for local areas in getting into LUCA. Many didn't have the capability or capacity to respond appropriately. They were often the smallest counties, with the difficult-to-reach housing types, and the ones with non-traditional address formats.

A: (Waite) Yes, 2000 was LUCA's first birthday and there were growing pains. From a learning curve perspective, we expect to do better for 2010. We are giving communities a bit more time than 2000 and working with states that have approached us with address information

A: (Salvo) In the pilot, Georgia was a model, it actively aided smaller communities.

Q: (Linda Tan, Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee) Can you speak more about the Hispanic count issue in 2000? (regarding Waite's comment about how small format changes can have big effects)

A: (Salvo) On the 1990 long form, under "other Spanish/Hispanic," specific examples were given, such as "Columbian," "Dominican," and "Salvadoran." However, on the 2000 long form, no examples were given. As a result, some people would select one of the previous options rather than writing in, say, "Dominican." In New York, we followed up with the Dominican population; 409,000 were counted, but we estimate there were 550,000 in the city.

(Waite) To clarify, we didn't undercount, but we weren't able to identify as "Dominican" all the folks who consider themselves to be Dominican. Another advantage of the ACS is its flexibility. If there's a format issue like the one Joe just described, we can change it for next year and address that issue quickly.

Q: If there are changes in ACS questions from year to year, how can Census produce 3-5 year estimates? Can you have variations if you want to keep comparability?

A: (Cuaderes) We shouldn't mess with the ACS right now, it's an infant and we have to let it grow up a bit before we start to tweak it.

(Waite) From a technical standpoint, we have periodic windows of opportunity to change the ACS questionnaire, aligned with the schedule for producing three and five year estimates. While there will have to be windows of opportunity for change, we can't do it every year.

Q:(Reamer to Salvo) Can you say more about NYC's experience with LUCA?

A: (Salvo) Through LUCA and other means, we worked with Census to add 370,000 addresses to the MAF. Most of the units omitted from the MAF were garage and basement apartments in more than 200,000 of the one-, two- and three-family homes scattered throughout the neighborhoods of the city.

Q: (Reamer to Waite) How much would a full-scale 2010 Update/Enumerate cost? What areas would get targeted?

A: (Waite) We haven't put together a full figure, but if Census receives its full budget request, that should get us by.

(Census staff) We will carry out Update/Enumerate in neighborhood clusters that appear to have high concentrations of problematic units. It's not cost-effective to do U/E with one unit here and there. It's worth it in clusters.

Q: (Reamer) What's the critical mass? How large does a cluster have to be to be a target?

A: (Census staff) We're in the process of determining that. Six-ten blocks might be appropriate, but we'll have to see.

Q: (J. Byers) The logical next question is what is the plan for the partnership activities for 2010? As we did in 2000, using local folks, trusted people in the communities leads to better results.

A: (Waite) It's obvious that we won't get as good a count without local assistance, if we just walk in and say "we're from Washington, we want to count you."

A: (McCully) In 2000, folks said that the paid advertising campaign was a tremendous success. State offices have asked to piggyback on this effort. They know the Census Bureau does the heavy lifting and want to leverage that.

Q: (Dan Wiley, Office of Representative Nydia Velazquez, New York) I know the point is not to make mistakes and make it better. Please speak more on statistical adjustment procedure.

A: (Waite): We at Census have convinced ourselves, after three censuses, that we are not able to use a reliable statistical adjustment procedure based on sampling. This time, we didn't seek funding for that program.²

A: (Cuaderes) The only way is to count everyone. A half a person maybe doesn't matter to the person on that block who hasn't met him, but it matters.

Q: (Connie Citro, Committee on National Statistics, National Academy of Sciences) In 2000, there were a lot of overcount issues with college students. What are your plans in this regard?

- A: (Census staff) Our best hope is to create better forms, clearer instructions, and more intuitive design (for those who don't read directions). We are adding a question asking if a person lives at another location. We can't really do address, name, date-of-birth matches because of the number of people with same names, but also because of confidentiality protections. We can't call and ask "are you the same John Smith that lives at so and so."

Q: (Wiley) How do you deal with new housing construction and the MAF?

A: (Waite) We had a program in 2000 to work with communities that had a particularly high rate of new construction. For 2010, we are considering doing a post-census new construction review program.

A: (2010 Staff) Beyond the New Construction Program we get updates from the Post Office's list of new addresses—simply addresses that the Post Office didn't deliver to before.

(Federal staff departed from the meeting at this point.)

Strategies for Effectively Communicating with the Congress about the Census – John Cuaderes, Staff Director, House Subcommittee on Federalism and the Census

Andrew Reamer's opening comments:

- As you know, the ACS was almost eliminated last year. If Senate version of the Census budget has passed, the ACS, improvements in the 2010 Census, and other programs would have been killed or cut back.

² Note: Census does use an imputation procedure, in which it estimates residency in known units that do not respond. After multiple unsuccessful attempts to physically count people in residences from which mailed census questionnaires are not returned, census takers utilize "hot-deck imputation," using scientific models to assign occupants (or "vacant" status) to these housing units. The Census Bureau assigns the number of occupants based on information collected from similar nearby housing units. In 1999, the Supreme Court struck down the use of "sampling," but in 2002, the Court noted that imputation differs from sampling in key ways and is allowable. For an overview of imputation for Census 2000, see <http://www.census.gov/pred/www/rpts/TR10.pdf>, p. 16.

- In October 2005, there was an ad hoc effort to educate Congress of the importance of these Census efforts. The notion in this session is to have a discussion on how to more effectively work with Congress on these issues.

Mr. Cuaderes began by stating that one impetus for organizing these briefings is the help Census stakeholders more effectively communicate the importance of Census data for their work, how they actually use the data.

Mr. Cuaderes remarked that internally the message that the Subcommittee on Federalism and the Census is trying to convey to Members is “that by tinkering with the census budget, you’re affecting 2012 [apportionment]. Members understand what new districts look like and how the redistricting process affects them.” Mr. Cuaderes pointed out that Members of Congress are often not aware of how the data affect their constituency.

Mr. Cuaderes also noted that it is important for stakeholders to realize that Members hear a lot of complaints about the census, particularly the long form. The American public does not like to be told that they have to fill out a survey of very detailed, personal questions and that if they don’t, they may face a fine or jail time. The result, Mr. Cuaderes explained, is that when votes come up, staff will communicate their experience—that they get complaints about the long form, about why it has questions on how many refrigerators a person has. If this is the only information that shapes a Congressional vote, then the Census should expect little support.

So how can stakeholders effectively communicate with their Congressional members?

Mr. Cuaderes recommended that census stakeholders organize their voice and coordinate their outreach. Last year many people were writing letters, Mr. Cuaderes pointed out, but the letter writing campaign was disorganized and did not come until the last minute. He emphasized that it is important to start communicating with Members now.

In terms of messaging, Mr. Cuaderes stated that it is critical to show Members how the data are used; for example, how are the data used to make more “fiscally responsible decisions.” “It’s a fiscal responsibility issue;” decisionmakers need good information to make good decisions, Mr. Cuaderes remarked.

In terms of outreach, Mr. Cuaderes stated that stakeholders need to better coordinate their efforts to target the key Members who are on the committees that affect the funding and support of the census programs. It is important to find those people who are ‘constituents’ of these programs. Mr. Cuaderes gave Target Corporation as an example. He stated that Joan Naymark, Target’s research and planning director, “has a great presentation on how Target Corporation uses census data to figure out how to stock its shelves.”

The main questions: how do you communicate to Congress the importance of the 2010 census and the budget needed to support the activities for an accurate count? How do you organize to target and educate. Mr. Cuaderes indicated that “We cannot let people take a vote against the ACS without them understanding these data and why they are important.”

Question and Answer

Q: (Reamer) You mentioned the letter to the Congress voicing concerns about the elimination of SIPP as a model to emulate. What did you like about it?

A: (Cuaderes) It's only 5 paragraphs long and it lists which organizations are for SIPP in each state. It would be even better if there was more detail in the second part. In general, if more than 3 or 4 people bring up an issue to a Member, he or she thinks "OK, this is an issue." With staffers and Members, that few a number is enough to consider the issue a "groundswell."

Q: (Reamer) There are membership organizations in the room, what steps can they take?

A: (Cuaderes) Organizations like NACo can have a big impact by having their members write Representatives and Senators. The House understands the importance of the decennial census because of apportionment. However, the Senate isn't affected by apportionment, so we have to change the argument in the Senate compared to the House.

Q: (Reamer) how many of the organizations present have communicated to Congress about census issues?

A: [All but one raise their hands.]

Q: (Reamer) Terri-Ann, please speak on The Census Project

A: (Terri-Ann Lowenthal) The Census Project is a nonpartisan group with wide membership of organizations supporting an adequate budget for the decennial census. One issue is the lack of sufficient resources for organizing.

(Wiley) It's hard for supporters to rally around a form, but a map, people can gather around that

(Reamer) Your point there is that using graphics is a good way to make the arguments.

(Byers) The basis of education is that everything is local. Census gives the basis to work from, it allows you to get local. Members need to understand that schools, roads, and homes are based on the census. That's the education effort we need to do.

Q: With the ACS, can we expect communities to ask about why my number is up and down year to year?

A: (Cynthia Tauber, former Census staff) We all will have to become more sophisticated users. The long form generated estimates with confidence intervals, but we ignored that because we didn't have to compare it to the previous year's survey.

Census is really good at statistics. They are not well versed in how the information is used, it's better that information on uses comes from the associations and others.

[Reamer closes with a thank you, and encourages audience members to be in contact with Brookings' Urban Markets Initiative regarding its Federal Data Agenda.]