

November 8, 2005

CENSUS NEWS BRIEF

APPROPRIATORS SPARE CENSUS BUREAU FROM DEEP CUTS

A House and Senate conference committee agreed last Thursday to give the Census Bureau \$812.237 million in Fiscal Year 2006, rejecting a much lower funding level adopted by the U.S. Senate in September. The Census Bureau received enough money to continue fielding the American Community Survey (ACS) for a second year and to add group quarters to the survey for the first time.

The 2006 Census Field Test, scheduled for next year in Travis County, Texas, and on the Cheyenne River Sioux Indian Reservation, South Dakota, also is likely to proceed, although original plans could be scaled back. Congress cut roughly \$10 million from the amount requested for 2010 census redesign activities.

The conference version of H.R. 2862, the Fiscal Year 2006 Science, State, Justice, Commerce, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, adopts the funding level approved by the House of Representatives in June. That amount is still \$65 million less than President Bush requested for the fiscal year that started October 1, 2005. The House Appropriations Committee originally cut \$45 million from the President's budget, \$25 million of which was earmarked for expenses related to the Census Bureau's new headquarters building in Suitland, MD. The full House cut an additional \$10 million from 2010 census planning activities and \$10 million from the Salaries and Expenses account to pay for anti-drug programs in the Justice Department.

In the conference report (H.Rept. 109-272), appropriators instructed the bureau to proceed with plans for the ACS and for updating the master address list and digital mapping system (TIGER) as proposed in the President's original budget. Within 60 days, the agency must submit a financial operating plan outlining how it will spend its FY06 funds. Lawmakers urged the Census Bureau to take steps to reduce the number of personal visits in its surveys, noting the high cost associated with field follow-up activities. With regard to ongoing research into ACS methods, conferees told the bureau to streamline data collection as much as possible and to ensure that survey questions are easy to understand.

Conferees commended the bureau for working with stakeholders to ensure an accurate count of Hispanic subgroups and for considering ways to include the population of Puerto Rico when reporting data on the United States. The conference bill includes language, first adopted last year, barring the Census Bureau from dropping the "Some other race" option from the race question. The Census Bureau must also submit a report to Congress within 90 days, on the possibility of counting prisoners at their "permanent homes of record," instead of at

their place of incarceration. Under current census residence rules, inmates are counted at the prison or jail in which they are held.

The bureau's Salaries and Expenses account, which funds ongoing economic and demographic data collection activities, received about \$198 million, the amount approved by the House. Conferees highlighted their interest in several trade reports and requested a one-time report on 2005 domestic sock production.

The House and Senate will vote separately on the conference bill, which cannot be amended, before the current Continuing Funding Resolution expires on November 18. The measure will then be sent to the President for his signature (or veto).

In related news of interest to many census data users, appropriators allocated roughly \$76.3 million for the Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis, \$5 million less than the President requested. BEA, a part of the Economics and Statistics Administration, publishes key measures of the economy, including Gross Domestic Product.

Former Census directors weigh in: In a letter last week to conferees, three former Census Bureau directors hailed the ACS as "a cost-effective innovation that provides detailed and timely information relevant to effective government" and a program that "will benefit the country disproportionately to the costs involved." Barbara Everitt Bryant (1989-92), Martha Farnsworth Riche (1992-97), and Kenneth Prewitt (1998-2000) also warned that inadequate field testing would put the 2010 census "at risk." The directors urged Congress "to reach a clear understanding [with the Commerce Department] about what the nation needs and can afford for the 2010 decennial census."

The directors' letter was circulated to all House members by Federalism and the Census Subcommittee Chairman Michael Turner (R-OH), Ranking Minority Member Wm. Lacy Clay (D-MO), and member Carolyn Maloney (D-NY).

Numbers in thousands of dollars.					
	FY05 Funding	President's Request (FY06)	House Mark	Senate Mark	Final FY06 Funding
Salaries & Expenses	\$196,110	\$220,029	\$198,029	\$183,029	\$198,029
Periodic Censuses & Programs	\$548,688	\$657,356	\$614,208	\$544,356	\$614,208
2010 Census Redesign	\$163,073	\$214,479	\$203,849	\$162,990	\$203,849
American Community Survey	\$144,122	\$169,948	\$169,948	\$144,059	\$169,948
MAF/TIGER Enhancements	\$81,449	\$79,799	\$79,799	\$79,799	\$79,799
TOTAL	\$744,798	\$877,385	\$812,237	\$727,385	\$812,237

Note: Periodic Censuses & Programs includes several other functions in addition to the three components of the 2010 decennial census function listed.

Census News Briefs are prepared by Terri Ann Lowenthal, an independent consultant in Washington, DC, with support from The Annie E. Casey Foundation and other organizations. Ms. Lowenthal is also a consultant to The Census Project, sponsored by the Communications Consortium Media Center. All views expressed in the News Briefs are solely those of the author. Please direct questions about the information in this News Brief to Ms. Lowenthal at 202/484-3067 or by e-mail at TerriAnn2K@aol.com. Please feel free to circulate this document to other interested individuals and organizations.