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Supporting the Census & ACS: A Toolkit for Coalition-Building - How State and Local Voices Can Make a Difference

March 2, 2016



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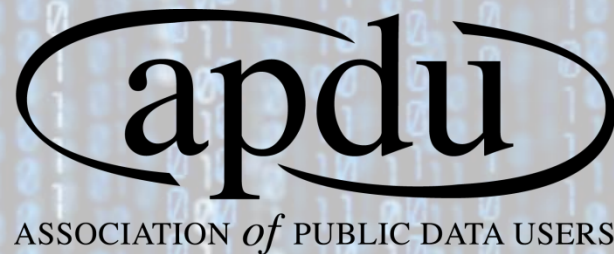
Upcoming APDU Webinar

**Social Security Administration – Office of Research, Evaluation and
Statistics (101 Series) (Title TBD)**

May 11, 2016

APDU.org/events/webinars/

Send webinar suggestions to bbuff@crec.net.

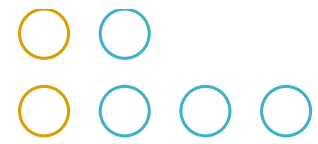
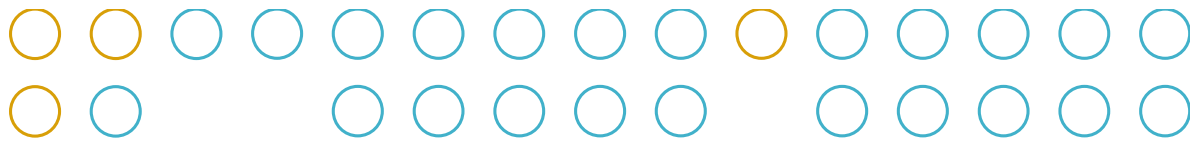


Supporting the Census & ACS: A Toolkit for Coalition-Building - How State and Local Voices Can Make a Difference

March 2, 2016

Logistics:

- Listen only mode
- Type questions in chat panel
- Copy of Slides - <http://apdu.org/webcast.asp>



SUPPORTING THE CENSUS & AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY:

A Toolkit for Coalition-Building

APDU/Census Project WEBINAR

March 2, 2016

Host

Brendan Buff, Association of Public Data Users

Introduction

Warren Brown, President, Association of Public Data Users

Presenters

- Phil Sparks, Co-Director, The Census Project
- Joan Naymark, Executive Director, MACS – Minnesotans for the American Community Survey

APDU Advocacy and Census Project team up to support census data



Advocacy



APDU's advocacy efforts cover a broad range of data issues and enable its members, from the casual user to the power user, to provide input to decision makers on important public data issues. APDU's advocacy efforts include:

Conducting Public Data Advocacy Efforts

Representatives from APDU regularly meet with members, partners, and policymakers and staff to discuss issues that affect public data. You can be a powerful advocate on statistical issues in Congress. See [Communicating with Congress: How to Deliver the Message](#) for more information.

<http://apdu.org/advocacy/>

The Census Project



Welcome to The Census Project website. The Census Project is a broad-based network of national, state, and local organizations that supports a fair and accurate 2020 Census and comprehensive American Community Survey (ACS – the modern version of the census “long form”). Our participating stakeholders represent a diverse range of American sectors that rely on objective data for decision-making and promote civic engagement: business and industry; civil rights advocates; state and local governments; social service agencies; researchers and scientific associations; planners; foundations; and nonprofits focused on housing, child and family welfare, education, transportation, and other vital services.

The Census Project

February 18, 2016

Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
H-305 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth H.G.B.
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey:

We write to urge your support for the President's Fiscal Year 2017 budget request of **\$1.634 billion** for the U.S. Census Bureau's vital work, especially two, related core programs that are central to promoting economic growth, guiding the prudent allocation of public and private resources, and sustaining a strong democracy: the **2020 Census** and the **American Community Survey (ACS)**.

2020 Census: The Bureau has requested **\$778 million** for 2020 Census planning, a reasonable (+\$182 million) but necessary funding “ramp up” as the agency completes development of IT systems and refines major operations in advance of the 2018 End-to-End Readiness Test. Sweeping design reforms — which include an unprecedented use of technology to collect and process census responses, and broad use of administrative records to update the address list and reduce the cost of follow-up with unresponsive households — could save more than \$5 billion over the lifecycle cost of the census.

In FY2017, the Census Bureau must complete production of interoperable systems to implement a re-engineered census with confidence. **The greatest risk to implementation of an accurate, cost-effective census, according to the Bureau's assessment, is a lack of adequate funding to fully evaluate and develop new methods and operations, which would force the Bureau to fall back on outdated, more costly methods.** Congress has directed the Bureau to conduct the 2020 Census for a lower cost than the 2010 Census, a goal the Bureau believes it can meet with sufficient investment in the testing and development phases. Continued robust development of census IT architecture, operations, communications, and field infrastructure will allow the Census Bureau to finalize the 2020 Census design and begin end-of-decade preparations in a timely way.

The 2017 Census Test will evaluate operational plans in “Update/Enumerate” areas, including Tribal lands; there also will be a first-ever site test in Puerto Rico. The Census Bureau must closely manage creation of a broad, nimble communications and partnership program, for which it will award a substantial contract in late FY2016. A flexible, culturally sensitive public education campaign is essential to promote high levels of

2020 Census Operational Plan Overview and Operational Areas

Lisa M. Blumenthal, Associate Director
Decennial Census Programs
U.S. Census Bureau

Conference Call Presentation to The Census Project
October 21, 2015

United States
Census Bureau
U.S. Department of Commerce
Economic and Statistics Administration
Washington, DC 20543
202-692-2200

Back Here On Earth...

By Terri Ann Lowenthal

It's time to come back down to earth, after the madcap, pre-Christmas scramble on Capitol Hill to pass a mammoth FY2016 spending bill on time, which in congressional-speak means “before the second quarter of the fiscal year begins.”

Or maybe not. Come back down to earth, that is.

I recently watched a rerun of CNN's “The Sixties” segment on the race into space. Being of a, ahem, certain age, I vividly remember watching Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin's grainy first steps onto the lunar surface almost a women of uncommon



The Census Project

FY2017 U.S. CENSUS BUREAU APPROPRIATIONS
Why Full Funding Matters
February 2016

Four years from now, the 2020 Census will be underway. More than 130 million households will receive an advance notice, urging them to respond via the Internet but offering other options to participate, such as mail or telephone. Regional Census Centers and Area Census Offices will be open and staffed. Hundreds of thousands of national, state, and local Census Partners will be launching outreach campaigns to urge participation. Census ads will be running on prime time television, radio, and social media platforms. The 2020 Census website must be ready to handle up to eight million hits a day during peak operations.

The 2020 Census must count roughly 334 million people in homes and group facilities across the country, as of Census Day (April 1st). Escalating costs for the 2010 count led the Census Bureau to explore modern ways of reaching people, collecting and processing data, and managing field operations. Congress has directed the bureau to spend no more on the 2020 Census than it did for the 2010 Census (“\$13 billion”). New counting methods and operational reforms could **save taxpayers \$5 billion** over the cost of repeating an outdated census design, and help produce a cost-efficient, accurate census. But Congress must invest now in refining sweeping design changes and in developing the IT and operational infrastructure to execute the new methods with confidence.

<http://thecensusproject.org/>



You rely on census data if you are:

- A **civic or elected official** who makes policy decisions or allocates resources based on accurate, consistent census data.
- A **research, data, or GIS analyst** who works in the public, private, or nonprofit sector?
- A **small business owner or corporate executive**.
- An **economic development agency**, or a Chamber of Commerce, working to attract jobs and talent to your community.
- Someone who plans **education, health, or housing** outcomes by understanding trends in the community.
- A **city leader** who needs to understand neighborhood change, or a county administrator in a rural area working to balance resources and the needs of the community.
- A leader of a **non-profit organization**, working to provide essential services for health care, education, job training, veterans, or housing.

Census data are at risk in Congress ---



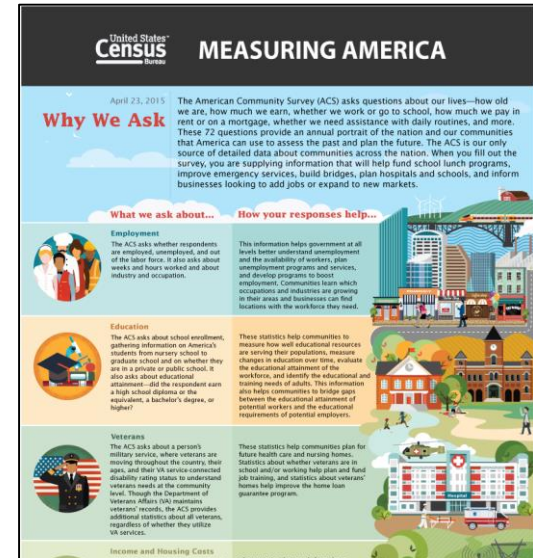
- Inadequate funding or funding that arrives too late for a cost-effective high quality 2020 Census
- American Community Survey sample size reduction and the real possibility of a “voluntary” survey





Some lawmakers have concerns about the census and ACS, fueled in part by calls from a handful of constituents:

- Confidentiality of data
- Privacy of personal Information



Lawmakers are also concerned about the cost of the census, mandating that the 2020 Census cost no more than the 2010 Census.





Myth: “If we’re not in DC,
we can’t make a difference.”



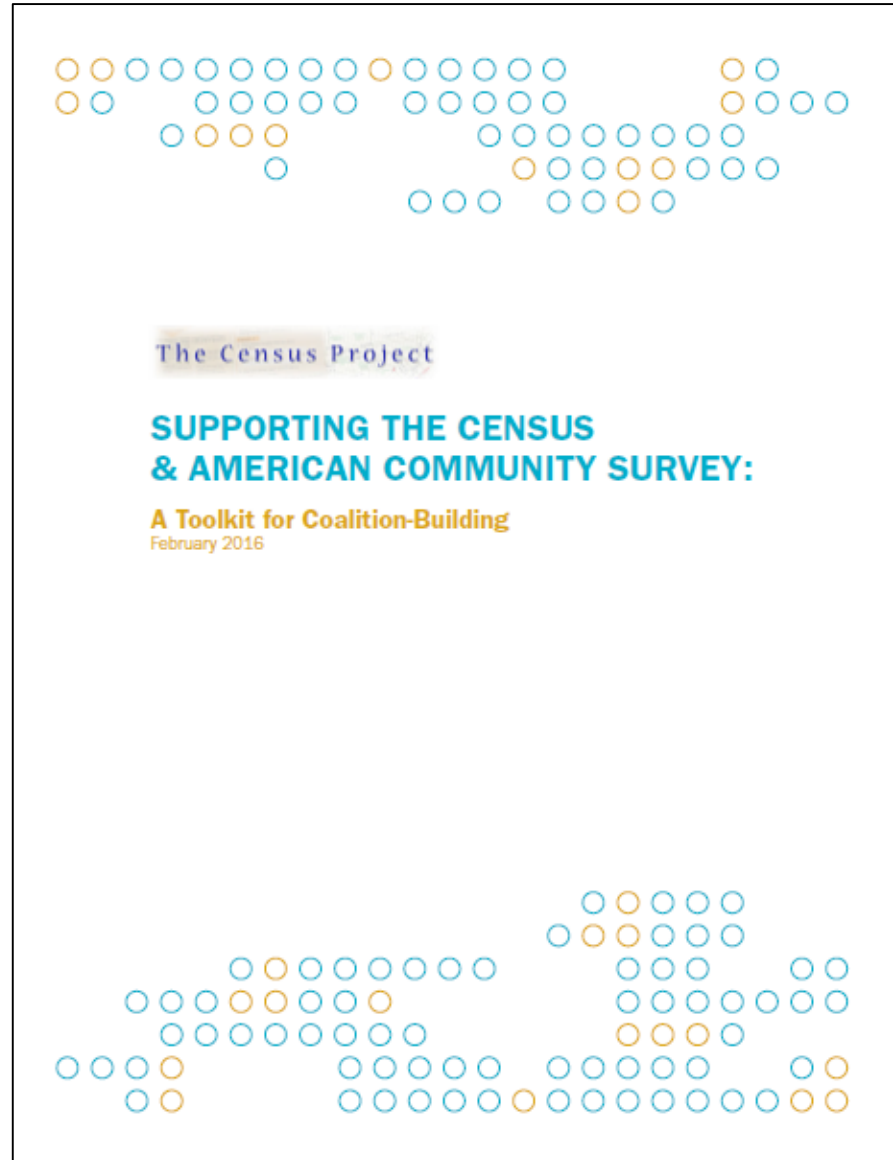
FACT: *It takes only a handful of calls or letters to elevate a topic to an issue for a member of Congress. That is achievable in every district and every state in the country and is amplified and strengthened through your local organization.*

A Toolkit for Coalition-Building



Engaging local voices is easy.

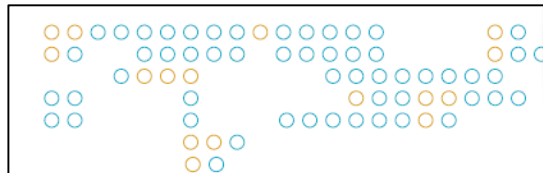
A free publication is now available on The Census Project website to help build a local stakeholder coalition to support census data.



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Building an Effective Local Coalition



ORGANIZE

- Get up-to-speed and stay informed <http://www.thecensusproject.org/>
- Choose an individual or organization to lead and coordinate the coalition
- Create a steering committee, board of directors, or advisory board
- Choose a name for your coalition
- Create a mission statement
- Determine your legal status and potential sources of funding, if appropriate

Action Item	Who	By When	Status
Get up to speed and stay informed			
<input type="checkbox"/> Sign up for The Census Project updates			
Choose leader/coordinator			
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify organization or individual/s to lead coalition			
<input type="checkbox"/> Confirm commitment; identify challenges			
<input type="checkbox"/> Determine resource needs & availability (staff, funds)			
Create a steering committee or board			
<input type="checkbox"/> Select and confirm members. Does it:			
<input type="checkbox"/> Represent a broad base?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Include a mix of leaders and data users?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Include technology/communications expertise?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Allocate tasks.			
<input type="checkbox"/> Meeting coordination			
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications			
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Media			
<input type="checkbox"/> Technical/web/site			
<input type="checkbox"/> Outreach to Congress			
<input type="checkbox"/> Manage outreach to supporters			
<input type="checkbox"/> Finances			
<input type="checkbox"/> Create a logo			
<input type="checkbox"/> Consider business cards			
<input type="checkbox"/> Set up email/gmail accounts for principal(s)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Establish address for official coalition business			
<input type="checkbox"/> Choose a name for your coalition			
<input type="checkbox"/> Create mission statement			
Determine legal status and funding			
<input type="checkbox"/> Set up new legal organization, if appropriate			
<input type="checkbox"/> Determine funding needs/sources			

Checklist: Building an Effective Local Census Coalition

Your mission statement:

- *Keep it short and simple*
- *Make it relevant to stakeholders and lawmakers*
- *Describe why accurate, timely census and ACS data are important to your state and communities*

Building an Effective Local Coalition



OUTREACH

- Start to build the coalition
 - *Geography*
 - *Business and economic development*
 - *Local units of government*
 - *NGOs – Nonprofits, foundations, and the faith community*
 - *Civil rights organizations*
 - *Newsmakers*
- Make the “ask” for organizations and individuals to become census data supporters



BUILDING BLOCKS FOR AN EFFECTIVE STATE-LEVEL COALITION

(see Resources, page 24; Checklist)

Each state will have a different set of priorities, issues, and types of organizations that will have the highest impact with its congressional delegation. Reach out to those who have a stake in the continuation of high quality census data. Consider a wide variety of stakeholders, such as agency and policy leaders who can speak about their mission; analysts and researchers who are closest to the data needs and applications; and organizational government liaisons. Here are some factors to consider:

- **Geography.** Consider major metro areas, regional hubs, and rural areas. Start with your primary population center(s), and then expand across the state.
- **Business and economic development.** These voices are influential with all members of Congress. Local councils of government, chambers of commerce, and economic development agencies use census data to attract businesses and jobs, remain competitive, and attract workers and talent to the area. Leverage these non-partisan voices to highlight economic health and growth.
- **Local units of government.** State government agencies use census data extensively for education, economic development and employment, health care, housing, and transportation. City and county planning, social services, and civil rights are also dependent on census data.
- **NGOs — Nonprofits, foundations, and the faith community.** These organizations use census data to identify community needs, monitor trends, and assess program effectiveness. Examples include USC – Local Initiatives Support Corporation, Catholic Charities, health agencies, Kids Count, Immigrant support agencies, and others.
- **Civil rights organizations.** Include groups that focus on underserved and vulnerable populations, including communities of color, persons with disabilities, the LGBT community, immigrants and refugees, low-wage workers, and children.
- **Newsmakers.** Identify local issues that are illuminated by census data, and local leaders and organizations that are prominent in those discussions.

Building Blocks
for an Effective
State-Level
Coalition

The MACS Model

Minnesotans for the American Community Survey



- Founded in 2013 in response to challenges to the ACS in Congress
 - Grew from 12 to 100 members between March & year-end 2013
 - 170+ organizational and individual supporters now
- Relationships developed with all 10 MN congressional offices
 - Staff & members in both D.C. and district offices
 - Lawmakers active in 2014, 2015, & 2016 to preserve and fund census data in both the House and Senate. 7 of 10 are active supporters!
- MACS Mission: *To educate Minnesota's congressional delegation and the public about the importance of consistent, reliable ACS census data for a healthy economy and to improve the well-being of all Minnesotans.*



Constituent
voices matter



Managing a Coalition; Advancing the Work



- Set priorities
 - Make policy statements
 - Encourage action by stakeholders
 - Encourage action by lawmakers
- Work with national partners
- Create information materials
- Good communication is essential
 - Leverage technology – website, social media, contacts
 - Internal communications keep everyone informed & engaged
 - External communications tell your story

Minnesotans for the American Community Survey (MACS)

Why is the ACS important?

ACS Census data is often the foundation for sound policy, planning, wise investments, resource allocation, & much more. Public, private, and non-profit sectors alike rely upon for data-driven decision making. ACS data help tell Minnesotans' stories, and then shape the policies that impact them.

The Census Bureau is at a Crossroads

It must obtain sufficient funding now, or lose resources to test and implement new innovations that could save the Census Bureau \$5 billion on the 2020 Census. Organizations all over the state and the country stand to lose valuable data if the US Census is not properly funded for 2020.

Local Projects Utilize ACS Data

The ACS Faces Threats

Elimination of 3-year Estimates
Due to budget cuts, the Census Bureau has already eliminated all future 3-year estimates.

Voluntary Survey = Loss of Data
The U.S. Congress has recently attempted to make the ACS voluntary. A voluntary ACS would diminish the quality & availability of small-area data which guide daily decisions across the state. Neighborhoods, rural areas, & small populations would suffer the most.

The Need for Funding is Immediate
The Census Bureau is in the "ramp up" period of testing and designing an efficient and effective system for the 2020 Census. Investing in this process now leads to +\$5 billion in unnecessary costs later.

Insufficient Funding → **Insufficient Investment** → **\$5 billion in costs**

Quality ACS data is vital to Minnesota's future

"Minnesota leaders...value good data and they use the American Community Survey daily to help make smart decisions."
-MN State Demographer Susan Brower

"Without ACS information, frankly we're planning blind, and we're spending billions of dollars. We want to spend it wisely, and I think you want us to spend it wisely as well."
-MN State Representative of Commerce President Todd Bergquist

"The fact that while many agencies are using ACS data...people don't always know that they're using data that comes specifically out of the American Community Survey."
-MN State Demographer Susan Brower

Minnesota and the ACS

Minnesota has among the highest ACS self-response rates in the entire nation!
MN: 72.245% US: 59.76%
(ACS preliminary self-response rates, 2012)

MN risks losing Congressional seat after 2020 Census. Innovative and accurate improvements to the 2020 Census are necessary for an accurate population count in order to retain our current seats in Congress.

Nearly half of MN cities are at risk for losing ACS data. Many of the state's cities are small enough that any significant decline in the ACS response rate would cause their data to be unavailable due to sample size.

What can I do about it?

Join MACS to support full federal funding for the ACS and 2020 Census. There is no cost to join; simply add your name in support of essential data.

MACS is a coalition of Minnesota leaders, policy and decision makers, business and development planners, forecasters, housing and social service providers, educators, and engaged citizens. MACS Mission is to educate Minnesota's members of Congress and the public about the critical importance of census data to drive a strong economy and improve the well-being of all Minnesotans.

www.MinnesotansForTheAmericanCommunitySurvey.org
Facebook: [MinnesotansForTheAmericanCommunitySurvey](https://www.facebook.com/MinnesotansForTheAmericanCommunitySurvey)



TECHNICAL TOOLS ENHANCE EFFICIENCY AND ESTABLISH A PROFESSIONAL LOOK.

- **Google Drive and Calendar:** Storage of materials and event/activity schedule
- **Doodle:** Coordination of schedules
- **Mailchimp:** Professional looking newsletters
- **Facebook/Twitter/LinkedIn:** Social media
- **IFTTT.com:** A way to automate posting from all others, or from a blog to social media accounts
- **Squarespace/Wix/WordPress:** Easy to use, intuitive website creation options for those without a technical background
- **Canva.com:** A website to create professional graphics without a technical background

Technical Tools

Managing a Coalition; Advancing the Work



- Continue to engage local supporters and partners
 - Make it easy to act
 - Leverage supporters' congressional contacts
 - Anticipate frequently asked questions
- Leverage the steering committee/board's network and expertise
- Engage the media – the press is a big consumer of census and ACS data



KNOWING WHEN TO ACT

Census stakeholders should be ready to communicate with their lawmakers at key moments in the legislative and appropriations process by following the lead of national census partners (see The Census Project website: Stakeholder Tools). There is a pattern to the federal legislative cycle during which key votes are made regarding Census Bureau programs. For a census data stakeholder coalition, action is concentrated in the Spring and Fall.

- **February:** President submits annual budget request for federal agencies and programs to Congress.
- **February – May:** House and Senate Appropriations subcommittees hold hearings to review budget requests for departments and agencies.
- **April – June:** Appropriations subcommittees (and subsequently full committees) draft and vote on 12 annual funding bills (called a "mark-up") covering federal government activities. The House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on Commerce, Justice, and Science, and Related Agencies are responsible for Census Bureau funding.
- **June – September:** The House and Senate debate and vote on the annual appropriations bills. The federal fiscal year starts on October 1st.

In recent years (2012-2015), Congress has not completed appropriations bills on time or through normal legislative procedures, resorting instead to passing Continuing Resolutions to sustain funding at last year's level, to roll all 12 separate appropriations bills into one omnibus appropriations bill. In addition, authority while infrequent, can occur at any time. For example, the House and Government Reform held a hearing in March 2015 on the possibility of a voluntary response.

Stakeholders should also reach out to congressional offices when Congress is not in session at a more informal "coffee", meeting, or event in the district. It is important to establish a working relationship with staff so the lawmaker will be ready to support census data and the ACS at key moments.

Knowing
when to act

Your Primary Goal: Educating Members of Congress



- Identify lawmakers' interests that are illuminated by census data
- Get to know congressional staff
- Arrange meetings with staff in the District and also Washington offices, if convenient
- Keep staff members informed about legislative activities that affect the census and ACS.



Sample Email Requesting a Meeting with a Congressional Office

To (congressional staff member email address)

Subject: Request (constituent) meeting in [District or DC office]. Coalition supporting census data

Hello, Mr./Ms. [name]

I am the Executive Director for [coalition name] [based in xxxx]. We are a local nonpartisan coalition of organizations, leaders, and individuals who believe in evidence based policy, investment, and resource allocation. American Community Survey and decennial census data help us drive sound decisions to improve the economy and well-being of [state name] communities and residents.

Senator/Representative [insert name]'s support for accurate, comprehensive census data is very important to [insert state name].

However, these critical data face challenges in Congress.

- The 2020 Decennial Census is one of our nation's most important activities, yielding information required by the U.S. Constitution for apportionment of the House of Representatives. Yet the 2020 Census is at risk. Without adequate and timely funding to design census methods that leverage modern technology, the 2020 Census could cost taxpayers upwards of \$5 billion dollars more than is necessary and result in lower quality information about our nation's population.
- The American Community Survey (ACS, formerly the census long form) is at risk of elimination or much lower data quality through defunding or by the survey becoming voluntary. Over \$400 billion in federal funds are allocated based on ACS data each year.

[/we will be in [district city or Washington D.C.] on [date]]. Are you available to meet? I'd like to share our perspective and tell you more about these current challenges. I'm available at [time options].

I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

[name]

Executive Director, [coalition name]

[coalition website link]

Phone number

Sample email requesting a meeting with a congressional office

What do lawmakers hear about the ACS and census?



WHAT DO LAWMAKERS HEAR ABOUT THE ACS?

In every congressional district, about 8,000 households receive the ACS questionnaire each year. Final ACS weighted household response rates are nearly 98 percent, with initial response rates (Internet and mail) averaging about 60 percent (although initial response rates are much lower across the South), reflecting an outstanding level of cooperation. Only a handful of people in each district call their member of Congress every year, asking about the questionnaire or expressing concerns about privacy or the legitimacy of the survey. It is Congress's job to respond to constituent concerns. It is essential that census stakeholders add balance to the conversation by conveying their support for ACS and census data.

The Census Bureau's Respondent Advocate addresses concerns from respondents and members of Congress about confidentiality, privacy, content, and response burden. The Respondent Advocate is an important ally for census coalitions, informing and educating members of Congress and the public about the need for ACS and census data and sharing the Census Bureau's stellar privacy track record. [Get to know the Respondent Advocate.](#)

- The primary mission of the Respondent Advocate is to advocate for respondents in all matters relating to Census surveys and censuses. -

"The primary mission of the Respondent Advocate is to advocate for respondents in all matters related to Census surveys and censuses."

Is this survey legit? Is it a scam?



Putting Respondents First Census Bureau Survey Help

Public cooperation is vital to ensuring that the Census Bureau provides accurate statistics about our nation's people, places and economy to help all levels of government operate efficiently and enable entrepreneurs and businesses to make informed decisions that grow the economy and create jobs. The Census Bureau is committed to making its surveys user-friendly and serving respondents' needs.

STEPS TO IMPROVE YOUR SURVEY EXPERIENCE

- Appointing a Respondent Advocate within the Census Bureau
- Reviewing every question on the American Community Survey (ACS) to reduce time needed to reply
- Putting the American Community Survey (ACS) and 60 other surveys online to reduce the need for follow-up contacts

RESOURCES TO HELP YOU

DAVE WADDINGTON, RESPONDENT ADVOCATE

Dave is your advocate throughout the survey design and data collection process. He collects feedback from people who receive surveys, as well as Congressional staff and stakeholder groups, to ensure that your needs are met, your concerns are addressed, and questions are answered.

TELEPHONE HELP

Census Bureau staff are available to answer questions, assist with completing questionnaires, provide information on protecting the security and privacy of your personal information, and explain the purpose of every question.

CENSUS BUREAU REGIONAL OFFICES

Census Bureau Regional Office staff are available to help you. For more information, please visit www.census.gov/regions.

CENSUS BUREAU WEBSITE

For FAQs related to our surveys and other information, please visit census.gov.



How to Get Help

Constituents with concerns about any Census Bureau survey can contact the Census Bureau's Respondent Advocate with their questions by phone or email. Our goal is to reply to individual requests within 24 hours.

**Dave Waddington,
Respondent Advocate**
respondent-advocate@census.gov
301.763.3195

ACS Help Line
For help completing the form,
from 9 a.m. to midnight
Eastern time,
call 1.800.354.7271

Census Call Center
For information about Census
Bureau surveys and data, from
8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern time,
call 1.800.923.8282

ACS Website
census.gov/acs
Census Regional Offices
For information on contacting
your regional office, go to
census.gov/regions

Alternative Models for Supporting Census Data



- Sector-Based Coalition
 - Partners and colleagues in your existing network, industry, or sector
- Targeting Congressional Committees
 - Appropriations Committees
 - Authorizing/Oversight Committees
- Rapid Response Strategy
 - Hybrid coalition across states, sectors, and interests.

“Big 7” - state and local government



Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights



Business Community

Bring actions to the state and local level

The Census Project

Conclusion



NOW IS THE TIME TO ACT.

The stakes are high for informed decision-making. The potential loss of consistent, accurate, small area census data requires immediate action from local areas and local voices.

- Constituents rarely mention support for census data to members of Congress. Yet, census data are used widely across all sectors of every lawmaker's district and state.
- Congress holds the power to:
 - provide adequate and timely funds for the 2020 Census and ACS.
 - maintain the ACS as a mandatory survey.
- Constituents matter to members of Congress – your voice has impact.

Imagine.... if 5-10 census stakeholders in *every congressional district* informed their member of Congress and both senators that **census data and the ACS are critically important to their local economy and the well-being of all, census data would have much stronger support in Congress.**



IT'S IN OUR HANDS

The Census Project

Get started. It's easy!



Local voices can change this outcome.

Download your free copy of

“Supporting the Census & American Community
Survey: A Toolkit for Coalition-Building”

at <http://www.thecensusproject.org/>



Questions? Comments?

**Thank you for attending today's
APDU/Census Project Webinar**

SUPPORTING THE CENSUS & AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY:

A Toolkit for Coalition-Building

APDU/Census Project WEBINAR

March 2, 2016

