

Enhancing the American Community Survey: Congress and the ACS

**Mary Jo Hoeksema, Director, Government Affairs
Population Association of America/
Association of Population Centers
September 22, 2011**





Congress and the ACS

Evolution of the American Community Survey

1990: Congress expresses interest in more timely “long-form” data.



1996: Census Bureau begins testing a continuous survey in 4 counties, increasing to 36 counties by 1999.



2000: Census Bureau launches Census 2000 Supplementary Survey with a national sample to test the ACS concept on a large scale.



2005: ACS implemented nationwide, replacing census long form in 2010 and beyond.



2006: First ACS estimates (based on 2005 ACS) released for areas with populations of 65,000 and greater.



Congress and the ACS

Major Congressional Actions

- **No Vote in Congress to create ACS.**
 - 2002 GAO opinion ruled Census Bureau had sufficient legal authority—Section 141 & 193 of the Census Act—to create ACS.
- **Extensive congressional involvement in ACS evolution**
 - Informal briefings
 - Hearings
 - House Census Subcommittee—2000, 2001, 2003
 - House and Senate appropriations guidance
 - FY 1998, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2012
 - Recommended outside evaluation on representation of rural communities in ACS design, FY 1998 (Senate #105-48)
 - Directed internet response, FY 2008 (H.R. 3093)
 - Requested study on voluntary response, FY 2002 (December 2003, “Meeting 21st Century Demographic Data Needs—Implementing the American Community Survey”)



Congress and the ACS

Recent Congressional Opposition to ACS

- **RNC Adopts ACS resolution, August 2010**
 - **Eliminate or make ACS voluntary**
- **Legislation**
 - **Make ACS response voluntary**
 - **H.R. 3131 (111th Congress)**
 - **H.R. 931 (112th Congress)**
 - **Proposed amendments to H.R. 1 (112th Congress)**
 - **Lankford and Mack—eliminate ACS funding**
 - **Pearce—eliminate periodic census funding**
 - **Michaud—shift \$80 million from Periodic Census**



Congress and the ACS

Response from Census Stakeholders

- **Census Bureau**
 - **ACS Compass handbooks**
 - www.census.gov/acs/www/guidance_for_data_users/compass_products/
 - **Multimedia videos on ACS uses**
 - http://www.census.gov/multimedia/www/videos/american_community_survey.php
- **Stakeholders**
 - Briefings
 - March 2011, Business and Government Uses of ACS
 - Meetings with congressional staff
 - Census Project coalition



Congress and the ACS

FY 2011 and FY 2012 ACS Funding

- **FY 2011**
 - **Request--\$247.9 million**
 - **\$44 million requested increase over FY10**
 - **Initiate plans to increase sample from 2.9 to 3.5 million housing units (2.5 % of population)**
 - **100% non-response follow-up targeted operation**
 - **Full review of 3 and 5 year data**
- **FY 2012**
 - **Request-- \$247.5 million**
 - **Test Internet response option**
 - **Continue plans for increased sample size**



Congress and the ACS

Status of FY 2012 Deliberations

- **House Report #112-169 (July 2011)**
 - \$855.3 million
 - \$294 million below FY2011
 - \$169 million below FY 2012 request
- **Report Language**
 - Requests report on small population groups 90 days after enactment, “*describing the steps it will take to ensure the availability and accuracy of these data.*”
 - Share its best practices for reaching “hard-to-count” communities with state and local governments.



Congress and the ACS

Status of FY 2012 Deliberations

- **Senate Report #112-078 (September 2011)**
 - \$943.3 million
 - \$206.4 million below FY2011
 - \$81.4 million below FY 2012 request
- **Report Language**
 - Concern about cost containment in periodic census programs
 - Preserve funding for Economic Census, but first “*focus on reductions to periodic censuses and agency-wide administrative cost savings.*”
 - Consider budgeting for Census 2020 below Census 2010 level and spend less than Census 2000 (not adjusted for inflation)



Congress and the ACS

Congress and Census Stakeholders: Shared Interests

- **Funding**
- **Number and Nature of Questions**
- **Implementation of Group Quarters**
- **Sample Size**
- **Technology**

Contact Information

Mary Jo Hoeksema

paaapc@crosslink.net

202-341-7283

Census Project

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

