



Support H. 4945, the Census Oversight Efficiency and Management Reform Act

April 27, 2010

The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
The Honorable Charles W. Dent
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Maloney and Dent,

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States, we are writing to express our support for your bill, the Census Oversight Efficiency and Management Reform Act (H. 4945). The bill includes needed reforms that will improve the operations of the decennial Census and other Census activities, and ensure a count that does not disproportionately miss any segment of the population. Given the significant changes to the Census Bureau that the bill would make, we strongly urge the committee of jurisdiction to hold a hearing for this legislative proposal prior to moving it.

The Census occurs on a constitutionally mandated ten-year cycle, while Presidential administrations run in four-year cycles that do not fit well with the complex planning and preparation timetable for the decennial count. This causes inevitable development and implementation difficulties due to a lack of consistency and, often, leadership vacuums. The bill's proposal to create a five-year term appointment for the Census Bureau Director is an important change that will allow the Census Bureau to avoid disruptions caused by changes in administrations, especially around the period of the decennial census.

As organizations that work to ensure that hard-to-count communities are fully included in the Census, we welcome the greater stability for the leadership of the Census Bureau that this legislation seeks to provide, which will in turn minimize disruptions in the Census and allow the Census Bureau to have improved continuity in its overall operations. We also believe that the new line of authority from the Census Director to the Secretary will help allow the Census Bureau to more nimbly address problems and issues that inevitably arise during the decennial census and other surveys. **If this legislation becomes law during the 111th Congress, we ask for greater clarification on how it will impact the current Director of the Census with respect to term limits.**

As Congress considers the bill, we hope that the issue of the **Internet Response Option** can be addressed or clarified. We welcome the forward-looking approach of the bill in addressing advanced technologies. However, we are concerned that as drafted, this section appears to assume that there will be an Internet response option both for the 2020 census and the American Community Survey, regardless of whether it would be feasible to do so in a way that preserves the Census Bureau's Title 13 obligations. Moreover, the legislation does not allow for or contemplate alternatives to the Internet, nor for advanced technologies that could be developed in the next decade and in place for the 2020 Census. We are also concerned that the timeline outlined in this section ("not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act") is earlier than either careful planning of content or the law would seem to require and, we note, would fall in the middle of the current decennial census. Finally, it will be important to clarify how the



Internet Response Option will impact hard-to-count communities, who are still disproportionately affected by a digital divide.

We look forward to working with you to address our concerns with the Census Oversight Efficiency and Management Reform Act, and to work toward a solution that enables the Census Bureau to perform its essential function more effectively. Should you require further information or have any questions regarding this issue, please contact Leadership Conference Census Task Force Co-Chairs Terry Ao, Director of Census & Voting Programs at the Asian American Justice Center, at (202) 296-2300 ext.127, or Arturo Vargas, Executive Director at the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials, at (213) 747-7606, or Corrine Yu, Leadership Conference Senior Counsel and Managing Policy Director, at (202) 466-5670.

Sincerely,

Wade Henderson
President & CEO

Nancy Zirkin
Executive Vice President

Cc: The Honorable William Lacy Clay, Chairman, Information Policy, Census and National Archives Subcommittee
Representative Patrick T. McHenry, Ranking Member, Information Policy, Census and National Archives Subcommittee