

# *Enhancing the American Community Survey: Congress and the ACS*

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# 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**
  - 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 (111<sup>th</sup> Congress)**
    - **H.R. 931 (112<sup>th</sup> Congress)**
    - **Proposed amendments to H.R. 1 (112<sup>th</sup> 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/](http://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](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

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