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For More Information Contact:  
Phil Sparks: 703-548-9371 or [psparks@ccmc.org](mailto:psparks@ccmc.org)  
Terri Ann Lowenthal: 202-258-2425 or [TerriAnn2K@aol.com](mailto:TerriAnn2K@aol.com)

## **House Considers Harmful Funding Cuts for 2020 Census and American Community Survey**

WASHINGTON – Today, the U.S. House of Representatives begins consideration of a budget bill passed last week by its appropriations committee; the bill would reduce the President’s FY2016 funding request for the U.S. Census Bureau by \$387 million, with the cuts primarily affecting 2020 Census planning and the American Community Survey (ACS), the modern version of the census long form.

Stakeholders of the [Census Project](#), in [a letter to all House members](#), expressed “deep concern” about the proposed cutbacks and their effect on planning for Census 2020 and the viability of the ACS.

“Failure to invest now in timely development of IT systems and the operational design, a robust communications campaign, final research on question topics and wording, and language and questionnaire assistance activities, would force the Census Bureau to abandon promising reforms and fall back on traditional, costly counting methods, in order to lower the risk of operational failures,” said the stakeholder letter.

In FY2016, for the 2020 Census, the bureau must develop IT systems and the operational design in time for an end-to-end readiness test in 2018. It must contract for a vast communications campaign that can navigate an increasingly fragmented media landscape; start preparing for questionnaire assistance and language support efforts; and research the most effective ways to reduce undercounting, avoid duplications, and count special populations, such as prisoners and overseas military personnel.

A project of the Communications Consortium Media Center  
401 Ninth Street NW, Suite 450, Washington, DC 20004  
202.326.8700  
[www.TheCensusProject.org](http://www.TheCensusProject.org)

The Obama Administration requested an increase in funding of \$317 million for 2020 Census planning and a \$15 million increase in funding for the ACS over its current annual \$242 million operating budget. Instead, the House appropriations bill allocates only a small funding increase for the 2020 Census and cuts overall funding for the ACS by 20 percent.

With regard to the ACS, [the letter](#) stated the bill would cut “funding for the ACS by almost 20 percent, which could force the Census Bureau to reduce the sample size, leaving rural and small communities (including American Indian reservations) without annual data to guide planning decisions, resource allocation, and economic development initiatives to attract new business investment.”

Finally, the stakeholders’ letter urged House members to oppose any floor amendments that would make participation in the ACS voluntary. The House has twice passed amendments to the annual Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bills that would have converted the ACS from a mandatory to an optional survey; the Senate did not accept these amendments in 2012 and 2014.

“We cannot continue to shortchange an activity so fundamental to our democracy and sustained well-being of our communities,” concluded the letter.

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