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For More Information Contact:

Howard Fienberg: howard.fienberg@insightsassociation.org, 202-570-7312

Census Bureau Gets \$1 Billion Increase in Final FY2019 Funding Law

WASHINGTON - Congress sent President Trump legislation yesterday including \$3.82 billion for all Census Bureau operations in Fiscal Year 2019, a billion dollar increase over FY18, as requested by Census Project coalition stakeholders. The President is expected to sign the bill today.

“Congress has stepped in with necessary funding at this crucial last year of preparation before the 2020 headcount,” commented Howard Fienberg, co-director of the Census Project coalition. “The decennial census clock is ticking down.”

The FY19 funding is on top of about a billion dollars in forward funding provided in the final FY18 appropriations law that allowed 2020 Census preparations to continue during the last few months despite the disruptive impact of continuing resolutions and a lengthy government shutdown.

In addition to the growing number of threats to a successful enumeration of the population in 2020, Congress also needs to be prepared for sticker shock in FY20, with at least \$8 billion reasonably needed for the massive operations that roll out in 2020.

The report accompanying the omnibus funding bill referenced the new life-cycle cost estimate provided by the Department of Commers in October, 2017: “... *the new estimate assumes the need for additional in-person follow-up visits due to fewer households expected to initially respond to the Census. In addition, the Census Bureau is directed to provide the Committees with notification 15 days before any spending it intends to incur in fiscal year 2019 that is above the amounts included in the October 2017 life-cycle cost estimate for fiscal year 2019.*”

The report also directs that the Census Bureau “*shall devote funding to expand targeted communications activities as well as to open local questionnaire assistance centers in hard-to-count communities.*”

Fienberg concluded that, “Census stakeholders across the nation are somewhat relieved and gratified at this bipartisan agreement to ensure the 2020 Census is properly funded, but we will remain vigilant that plans are implemented and Congress stays committed to a full, fair, and accurate count.”

The Census Project (<https://thecensusproject.org>) is a broad-based coalition of national, state, and local organizations that support an inclusive and accurate 2020 Census and American Community Survey (ACS) (the modern version of the census “long form”). Its member organizations, representing the private, public, non-profit, and academic sectors, rely on objective data that the Census Bureau produces to inform evidence-based investment, policy and planning decisions.