

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 11, 2009

President Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As Republicans who share a goal of a fair, accurate and trustworthy 2010 Census that counts every person, we are surprised and disappointed by reports that your administration is taking the unprecedented step of moving control of the Census Bureau and the 2010 Census from the Commerce Department to political operatives on the White House staff. We are writing to register our grave concerns about this change, which would result in the unprecedented politicization of the Census^[1] and open the door to massive waste and abuse in the expenditure of taxpayer funds, billions of which are distributed on the basis of Census data. We respectfully request that you reconsider and reverse this controversial and harmful course of action.

As noted on the U.S. Census Bureau's own website, "Census data are used to distribute Congressional seats to states, to make decisions about what community services to provide, and to distribute \$300 billion in federal funds to local, state and tribal governments each year." Placing the Census under the control of political operatives in the White House will inevitably corrupt the independence of all of these critical Census functions, and could result in a dramatic increase in abuse and misallocation of taxpayer funds at a time when both parties should be working together to eliminate such waste.

There is no legitimate historical precedent for placing the nonpartisan, apolitical Census Bureau under the control of political operatives on the White House staff, let alone the former chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC). Doing so will, in fact, greatly undermine the goal of a fair and accurate Census count. The Census Bureau is staffed by experienced and talented professionals who are leaders in the field of statistics. In order to produce a fair, accurate and trustworthy count during the 2010 Census, the Census Bureau needs to remain an agency free from political or partisan interference.

This is a bipartisan goal. In fact, Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) introduced legislation in September 2008 that specifically stated:

"The credibility and impartiality of data from a Federal statistical agency depends critically on whether the agency operates from a strong position of independence; therefore, the authority for conducting the decennial census of population and any economic or other censuses or surveys should be vested in an agency with a clear and well-defined position of independence."^[2]

^[1] *Washington Post*, Philip Rucker, 2/5/09

^[2] "Restoring the Integrity of American Statistics Act of 2008," H.R. 7069

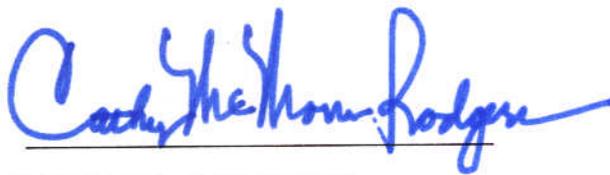
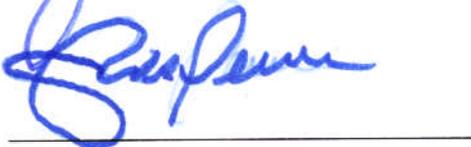
The importance of an independent Census was emphasized last year in a letter signed by every living former Census Director, appointed by both Democrat and Republican Presidents, in which they wrote:

“[F]ollowing three decades during which the press and the Congress frequently discussed the Decennial Census in explicitly partisan terms it is vitally important that the American public have confidence that the census results have been produced by an independent, non-partisan, apolitical, and scientific Census Bureau.”^[3]

After the 2000 Census, former Committee Chairman Waxman, former Minority Leader Dick Gephardt and former Democratic Caucus Chairman Martin Frost expressed their “hope that the Census Bureau did not suffer from inappropriate political pressure,” and went on to “urge the Bush Administration to allow the professionals at the Census Bureau to continue their work without interference.”^[4] Now, prior to the 2010 Census, we express our hope that the Census Bureau will not suffer from inappropriate political pressure. It is critical that we allow the professionals at the Census Bureau to continue their work without interference, and that we assure American taxpayers that the annual distribution of the \$300 billion in federal aid based on Census data will not be squandered and tainted by partisan influence.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that you reconsider and reverse your administration’s plans to transfer control of the Census Bureau and the 2010 Census to the White House staff. A fair, accurate and trustworthy Census is essential and vital to the interests of all American citizens and taxpayers.

Sincerely,



^[3] Letter of endorsement from former Census Directors Vincent P. Barabba (1973-76 and 1979-81), Bruce Chapman (1981-1983), John G. Keane (1984 – 1987), Barbara Everitt Bryant (1989 -1993), Martha Farnsworth Riche (1994-1998), Kenneth Prewitt (1998-2001) and Charles Louis Kincannon (2002 - 2008). “The signatures to this Letter served as Director of the U.S. Census Bureau, appointed by Presidents Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, G. H. Bush, Bill Clinton, and G. W. Bush,” 9/28/08

^[4] Statement from the Office of the House Democratic Leader, 3/1/01

Pete Sessions

Pey Rhent

David Owen

Kevin McCarth

David Lee

Patricia McKenna

Sybil White

Lamar Smith

David E. Lopez
