

Opening Statement
of
Wm. Lacy Clay (D-MO), Chairman
Information Policy, Census, and National
Archives Subcommittee
Oversight and Government Reform Committee

***“Critical Budget Issues Affecting the
2010 Census”***

2154 Rayburn HOB – 10:00 A. M.
October 16, 2007

Good morning and welcome to today’s hearing. We plan to examine issues surrounding the FY 2008 Continuing Resolution (CR) and its effect on the 2010 Census.

Congress has routinely exempted the Census from the flat-line funding requirements of a CR in other years, most notably in 1998 and 1999 prior to Census 2000. Earlier this year, Commerce Department officials testified before both the House and the Senate and made it clear that a CR which did not exempt the Bureau of the Census would have significant, negative consequences for the intricate decade-long plan for the 2010 Census. Administration witnesses emphasized that without

such language, a CR would dramatically jeopardize the accuracy, cost and coverage of the 2010 Census. Congress and the Administration agreed on this CR without this important language and we are now faced with an apparent crisis.

As the Census Bureau ramps up to the 2010 Census, its annual appropriations will grow exponentially. Indeed, in fiscal year 2008, the Census Bureau will receive almost a 40% increase in funding.

The Dress Rehearsal for the 2010 Census is scheduled to occur in less than five months. This is the last chance to test the vast changes in the census design -- what the Administration touts as the “re-engineered Census.”

Census officials tell us that the CR may make it impossible to fund the final phase of the Dress Rehearsal, which could mean that for the first time in 40 years, we can't test of the final Census design, even as we undertake the most significant reform of the Decennial since the advent of the Long Form.

Our goal today is to start the process to insure that as negotiations commence for the next CR, we take definite steps to insure that:

1. There will be no scaling back, cancellation or delay in the Dress Rehearsal as planned.
2. Nothing in the CR language will hinder, delay or deny the planned funding and execution of the contracts for the handheld computers, the advertising program, the partnership program, or the data capture program.
3. That OMB will use every means necessary to grant Bureau of the Census officials any waivers or exemptions from Administration spending restrictions in order for them to meet these requirements.

We will look at some of the potential problems that have arisen and how to solve or avoid these pratfalls. I look forward to the testimony of these witnesses.