

Opening Statement of Rep. Wm. Lacy Clay, Chairman

Hearing on “2010 Census: Using the Communications Campaign to Effectively Reduce the Undercount”

Information Policy, Census, and National Archives Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

July 10, 2008

Today we will focus on the U.S. Census Bureau’s plans to accurately count historically undercounted populations, including racial, ethnic and language minorities, during the 2010 Decennial. I am pleased to welcome several visiting Members to this important hearing. I ask unanimous consent for them to sit at the dais.

The Census is a vital, constitutionally-mandated survey that policy makers and demographers rely on to inform our decisions, allocate over \$300 billion in Federal Funding, reapportion Congressional seats and redistrict within states. Therefore, it is essential that the data be complete and accurate.

The Bureau will use its communications campaign to help improve accuracy, increase the mail response rate and reduce the differential undercount. Unfortunately, cost overruns in other areas have fueled concerns regarding the Bureau’s budget for the communications campaign.

Given the high level of distrust of government in hard-to-count communities, the Bureau cannot risk the impact of underfunding this campaign, which encompasses the successful partnership and Census in Schools programs.

While I can appreciate the budget challenges that resulted from the Bureau’s decision to revert to a paper Census, most would agree that the communications campaign is underfunded. In order to duplicate the accomplishments of the 2000 Census, which undercounted over 3 million people, the communications campaign needs millions of dollars more.

It is equally disturbing to learn that funding for outreach to minority communities has been cut or “reprogrammed” when they have the greatest needs.

An inaccurate 2010 Census will leave many states without their fair share of Federal dollars and will handicap local governments for 10 years.

With less than two years until the 2010 census, I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses and learning how Congress can best partner with the Bureau in addressing these concerns.