Enhancing the American Community Survey: Congress and the ACS

Mary Jo Hoeksema, Director, Government Affairs Population Association of America/ Association of Population Centers September 22, 2011



Evolution of the American Community Survey

1990: Congress expresses interest in more timely "long-form" data.

1996: Census Bureau begins testing a continuous survey in 4 counties, increasing to 36 counties by 1999.

2000: Census Bureau launches Census 2000 Supplementary Survey with a national sample to test the ACS concept on a large scale.

2005: ACS implemented nationwide, replacing census long form in 2010 and beyond.

2006: First ACS estimates (based on 2005 ACS) released for areas with populations of 65,000 and greater.



Major Congressional Actions

- No Vote in Congress to create ACS.
 - 2002 GAO opinion ruled Census Bureau had sufficient legal authority— Section 141 & 193 of the Census Act—to create ACS.

Extensive congressional involvement in ACS evolution

- Informal briefings
- Hearings
 - House Census Subcommittee—2000, 2001, 2003
- House and Senate appropriations guidance
 - FY 1998, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2012
 - Recommended outside evaluation on representation of rural communities in ACS design, FY 1998 (Senate #105-48)
 - Directed internet response, FY 2008 (H.R. 3093)
 - Requested study on voluntary response, FY 2002 (December 2003, "Meeting 21st Century Demographic Data Needs—Implementing the American Community Survey")



Recent Congressional Opposition to ACS

- RNC Adopts ACS resolution, August 2010
 - Eliminate or make ACS voluntary
- Legislation
 - Make ACS response voluntary
 - H.R. 3131 (111th Congress)
 - H.R. 931 (112th Congress)
 - Proposed amendments to H.R. 1 (112th Congress)
 - Lankford and Mack—eliminate ACS funding
 - Pearce—eliminate periodic census funding
 - Michaud—shift \$80 million from Periodic Census



Response from Census Stakeholders

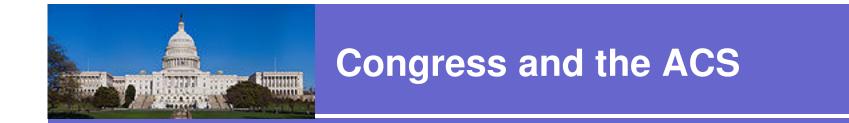
- Census Bureau
 - ACS Compass handbooks
 - www.census.gov/acs/www/guidance for data users/co mpass products/

Multimedia videos on ACS uses

<u>http://www.census.gov/multimedia/www/videos/america</u>
<u>n community survey.php</u>

Stakeholders

- Briefings
 - March 2011, Business and Government Uses of ACS
 - Meetings with congressional staff
 - Census Project coalition



FY 2011 and FY 2012 ACS Funding

- FY 2011
 - Request--\$247.9 million
 - \$44 million requested increase over FY10
 - Initiate plans to increase sample from 2.9 to 3.5 million housing units (2.5 % of population)
 - 100% non-response follow-up targeted operation
 - Full review of 3 and 5 year data
- FY 2012
 - Request-- \$247.5 million
 - Test Internet response option
 - Continue plans for increased sample size



Status of FY 2012 Deliberations

- House Report #112-169 (July 2011)
 - \$855.3 million
 - \$294 million below FY2011
 - \$169 million below FY 2012 request

Report Language

- Requests report on small population groups 90 days after enactment, "describing the steps it will take to ensure the availability and accuracy of these data."
- Share its best practices for reaching "hard-to-count" communities with state and local governments.



Status of FY 2012 Deliberations

- Senate Report #112-078 (September 2011)
 - \$943.3 million
 - \$206.4 million below FY2011
 - \$81.4 million below FY 2012 request

Report Language

- Concern about cost containment in periodic census programs
- Preserve funding for Economic Census, but first "focus on reductions to periodic censuses and agency-wide administrative cost savings."
- Consider budgeting for Census 2020 below Census 2010 level and spend less than Census 2000 (not adjusted for inflation)



Congress and Census Stakeholders: Shared Interests

- Funding
- Number and Nature of Questions
- Implementation of Group Quarters
- Sample Size
- Technology

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Census Project

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