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SPEAKER OF THE STATE ASSEMBLY

INFORMATION POLICY, CENSUS AND NATIONAL ARCHIVES SUBCOMMITTEE
WRITTEN TESTIMONY, APRIL 30TH, 2010

Good afternoon, Chairman Clay and fellow members of the Committee. Like Ms. Pasquil, I want first to thank you for holding this hearing. Tomorrow, we begin the next phase of the 2010 Census, Non-Response Follow-Up, the labor intensive effort to reach those who, unfortunately, did not return the census forms that were mailed out.

In California, 3 out of 10 homes in our state still need to be counted. Our state poses a particularly daunting challenge: We have 12% of the nation's population, but 30% of its "hard to count" population. Los Angeles County is the single largest "hardest to count" jurisdiction in the United States. And I represent one of the hardest to count districts in the Assembly, with only a 64% response rate, although that number is actually an improvement over 2000.

This door-to-door canvass is an effort unlike any other undertaken by the government. The goal is simple. Count every single person. The scope of the process is staggering. Thousands of workers in California alone knocking on the door of every household that failed to mail back their Census form.

The Census is vital to the efficient operation of California government. The undercount from the 2000 Census has cost California \$1.2 Billion annually—money that could have alleviated at least some of the budget shortfalls we have faced over the past several years. I would like to take this opportunity to remind all Californians that an accurate count is very important to our state, so when a Census taker knocks, please open your door.



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USCB should allow its Regional Directors to have greater input not only about the local media buys, but the actual creative messages during NRFU.

Second, during this phase the Bureau needs to continue to engage community based organizations. One of the most critical components to California's efforts are being funding by private foundations. They are supporting their own canvass operation to coincide with NRFU to make sure local, trusted messengers are directly contacting residents to make sure that when the census taker knocks that door is opened.

Third, this local tailoring needs to extend beyond just the media program and actually reach those in the field collecting forms. Each community has its own challenges. For example, "hotbedding", is a military term referring to the practice of assigning two or even three crew members, sharing the same bunk sleeping in shifts. This same practice has been adopted by some in the immigrant community in Los Angeles. In reaching this community, Census takers already have to overcome language barriers and trust issues. Even after overcoming these challenges and convincing residents to open their doors, if they are unaware of this practice, they may fail to count everyone who resides at that address, resulting in an undercount. This is just one example. I'm sure every member of this committee could cite different unique challenges in their states.



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Second, Congress needs to find a funding mechanism to support state, local and CBO efforts. If the USCB cannot be that mechanism to fund these efforts, Congress should explore CSGB or HUD as options to fill this critical gap. The Census affects us for a decade and its success should not be dependent on the short term status of state budgets. I find it troubling and so should this Committee that in California, as of Monday there will be no member of the Administration working full time on the Census just as non-response follow-up begins.

Early and predictable funding for these local efforts will add to the success of federal efforts. It will allow governmental and non-governmental organizations to truly develop those trusted messengers and tailor messages that everyone agrees are the key to success. Further, this funding will allow state and local governments to continue to be innovators. That so much of the national 2010 outreach program is based on California's 2000 outreach program shows the value of this type of investment.

Having robust state and local partners will also provide more opportunities to test new approaches. California would be eager to serve as an innovation laboratory for the nation, testing idea like allowing Census forms to be completed online at institutions of higher education and expanding the Census in Schools program to including information about the Census in textbooks.