

Opening Statement of Rep. Wm. Lacy Clay (D-MO), Chairman

Hearing on "2010 Census: Improving Local Government Participation in LUCA"

House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on Information Policy,
Census, and National Archives

June 26, 2007

Good afternoon and welcome to today's hearing on improving local government participation in the Local Update of Census Addresses, or "LUCA", program. This is the second in a series of oversight hearings looking at Census Bureau's preparations for the 2010 Census. Today's hearing will focus on the implementation of tools to ensure that the Bureau has the information it needs to locate and count all individuals in the United States on Census Day, April 1, 2010.

The Decennial Census is the single most important survey conducted by our government and the only one expressly required by the Constitution. It determines how congressional seats are apportioned and directly affects the way government resources are allocated.

The Census counts people where they reside on Census Day. Each individual's location is determined not by name, telephone number, or other personally identifiable information, but by address. Therefore, an accurate enumeration of the population requires the Bureau to have current and complete address lists and maps. This is the sole purpose of the LUCA program, which involves address information sharing among the Census Bureau, the U.S. Postal Service, and local governments.

Authorized by the Census Address List Improvement Act of 1994, LUCA was first implemented for the last decennial Census. For the 2000 Census, 53 percent of the 39,051 local entities that were eligible to participate chose not to do so. Meanwhile, 25 percent submitted at least one address correction or challenged at least one block. As a result, millions of homes were not included on the Census address list, were improperly deleted, or were incorrectly located on Census maps. This contributed to what is commonly known as "the undercount," which historically has had a disproportionate impact on racial or ethnic minority communities.

Since 2000, the Bureau has made adjustments aimed at increasing local government participation and decreasing the undercount. Today we will hear about those changes, as well as GAO's recent evaluation of LUCA implementation efforts for the 2010 Census.

Another important question to examine is why the Bureau determined not to employ so-called Update/Enumerate in the 2008 Dress Rehearsal. At the Subcommittee's previous 2010 Census hearing, held on April 24th, Dr. Joe Salvo, Director of the Population Division in New York City's Department of City Planning, and a prominent LUCA expert, endorsed using this methodology to ensure the counting of individuals who reside in non-standard, multi-family dwellings where apartment numbers are either confusing or absent. Testing it prior to conducting the 2010 Census could improve its effectiveness and save costs in the long run, but budget limitations appear to have informed the decision not to employ it during the Dress Rehearsal.

Two other factors that will be vital to obtaining an accurate count in 2010 are public outreach and cultivation of trust. The present time is characterized by allegations of government violations of civil rights and liberties, rising anti-immigrant sentiment, well-publicized government data breaches, and identity theft as a common crime. All of this feeds public mistrust of government, which makes the job of increasing Census response rates more difficult. Therefore, the Census Bureau must use every legal and viable means, including public/private partnerships, to instill public confidence in its ability to conduct a thorough Census without putting anyone's privacy at risk.

I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses, who will tell us how LUCA and other tools can help us meet the challenge of enumerating the population accurately on Census Day 2010.

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