

Responsive Philanthropy

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Students at Gateway Math and Science Elementary School work on a census lesson during the St. Louis launch of the Census in Schools program. Census in Schools is designed for students in kindergarten through 12th grade and will reach all 118,000 schools and 56 million students nationwide. Photo Courtesy of U.S. Census Bureau, Public Information Office

The Count that Matters: Philanthropy and the 2010 Census

In just a few months, the great national headcount will begin. The census is the nation's largest peacetime mobilization of personnel and resources, and the results influence – directly or indirectly – almost every issue U.S.-focused philanthropies support,

including political empowerment, social justice, better education, health care, and infrastructure for disadvantaged communities.

While the Census Bureau spends billions of dollars on the count, almost none of those resources go to nonprofits, whose outreach to minorities, the poor and immigrants can spell the difference between high undercounts and an inclusive enumeration. Foundations have stepped forward to fill some of this resource gap, but more could be done to sup-

port organizations engaged in critical census education and promotion.

Any census count that misses the most vulnerable in our society raises serious civil rights concerns – concerns about equal treatment under the law and equal access to economic opportunity. These are rights the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights has fought to secure for 60 years. To us, an accurate census is a civil rights imperative – critical to ensuring an America as good as its ideals. *(continued on page 12)*

By Wade Henderson



challenging grantmakers
to strengthen communities

The 2010 Census and Civil Rights *(continued from page 1)*

WHY AN ACCURATE CENSUS MATTERS

Mandated by the U.S. Constitution, the decennial census is the basis not only of our democratic system of governance but for virtually all demographic and socioeconomic information used by educators, policymakers and community leaders.

Census data determine representation in Congress and Electoral College allocations, federal spending on many important programs, compliance with federal civil rights laws and private sector decisions on investment and location of facilities. Every ten years, the census is used to reapportion seats in the House of Representatives and then to draw legislative districts within each state. The number of presidential electors each state receives equals the number in its congressional delegation. State and local governments use census numbers to draw their own legislative lines.

Census data affect national and local decision-making on all domestic

policy issues, including education, employment, veterans' services, public health care, rural development, the environment, transportation and housing. More than \$400 billion annually in federal program funds is allocated, based in whole or in part, on census data; in addition, state and county governments use census information to distribute billions more for essential services. The data also are used to monitor compliance with, and enforcement of, civil rights statutes, including the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and employment, housing, lending and education anti-discrimination laws.

Counting every person in the United States is an enormous and complex endeavor, and despite the Census Bureau's best efforts, some people are missed, some are double-counted, and still others don't respond fully. Because the accuracy of the census directly affects our nation's ability to ensure equal representation and equal access to public and private resources for all Americans, ensuring a fair and accurate census must be

regarded as one of the most significant civil rights and social justice issues facing the country today.

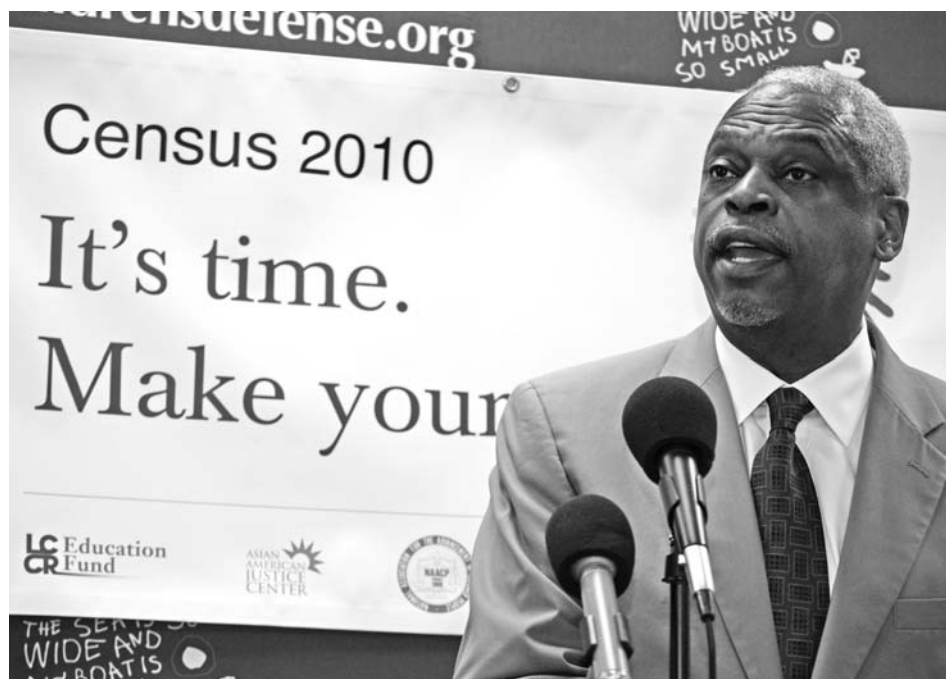
THE 2010 CENSUS PLAN

For the 2010 count, the Census Bureau will spend close to \$14 billion over a ten-year period to research, plan and prepare for the enumeration, almost half of it in the census year alone. While the Census Bureau has spent the entire past decade planning for the 2010 census, significant operations started in 2008 with a "dress rehearsal" and a program to share preliminary address lists with states and municipalities. In 2009, address listers canvassed every city block and rural road to update the master address file that sets the universe for the 2010 count. The Census Bureau printed more than 200 million questionnaires, opened local offices across the country and began recruiting more than a million temporary census employees, most of whom will work for two or three months during peak operations in the spring of 2010.

Most American households will receive their census forms by mail in March 2010 and are encouraged to mail them back by April 1 (Census Day). From May through early July, census takers will follow up with unresponsive households; subsequent field and phone operations will check on large households (more than six residents), vacant units, and other addresses where people might have been missed or double-counted. The bureau will report state population totals to the president for apportionment purposes by the end of the year, and send detailed population counts to the states for redistricting by March 31, 2011.

The linchpin of efforts to achieve an accurate count is an integrated communications plan, consisting of a partnership program, paid advertising and a Census in the Schools program. The

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF LCCR.



Wade Henderson, president and CEO of LCCR, during a Census campaign event.

campaign includes promotion in 28 languages and assistance guides in 59 languages, to reach the diverse and growing immigrant population. The 2010 Census Partnership Program recognizes the pivotal role of nonprofits, businesses and state and local governments in promoting the census. Paid media kicks off in mid-January; through the winter and spring, the Census Bureau will be the largest advertiser in the U.S., blanketing television, radio, print media and the Internet with messages encouraging census participation.

THE ROLE OF NONPROFITS IN THE 2010 CENSUS

Under the best of circumstances, achieving a fair and accurate count is an enormous and complex undertaking with huge stakes for individuals and communities. Historically, the census has missed disproportionately high numbers of racial and ethnic minorities, who are more likely to live in areas designated by the Census Bureau as “hard-to-count.” The uneven accuracy of the census has significant civil rights implications, adversely affecting equality of political representation and economic opportunity for racial and ethnic minorities, low-income households, people with limited English proficiency and others.

The task will be particularly daunting in 2010. There are new and even unanticipated challenges: unprecedented population diversity; displacement of thousands by natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina; general public unease with the government; post-9/11 concerns about data confidentiality; an anti-immigrant environment in many communities; and, most recently, a severe economic recession that has uprooted families from their homes and neighborhoods. Compounding these factors were significant internal challenges, including funding shortfalls

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early in the planning cycle, vacuums in leadership and frequent turnover among senior managers and the failure of major information technology systems. And the census continues to be a magnet for larger policy disputes, especially over immigration reform. Anti-immigration lawmakers held up census funding in an unsuccessful effort to add new questions on immigration status to the 2010 form, while a small but vocal group of Latino evangelical clergy has called for undocumented immigrants to sit out the census entirely.

The \$400+ million communications campaign is designed to help overcome all of these challenges, but the Census

Bureau cannot accomplish its goals in isolation. The overarching message for 2010 – that census participation is important, easy and safe – often resonates with hard-to-reach populations only when conveyed by trusted voices and through trusted organizations.

National advocacy groups and community-based organizations have played an extraordinary role in raising public awareness about the census and promoting participation among the hardest-to-count segments of the population. The Leadership Conference has partnered with four respected civil rights groups with census expertise – the Asian American Justice Center, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials, the NAACP and the National Congress of American Indians – to launch a national census education and promotion campaign.

The goal of the “It’s Time. Make Yourself Count! Census 2010” campaign (<http://www.civilrights.org/census>) is to educate civil and human rights advocates and social service organizations about the importance of a fair and accurate 2010 census, and to encourage census participation in hard-to-enumerate communities. Our efforts include train-the-trainer workshops in a dozen target cities; fact sheets on key policy and operational issues; a toolkit to help grassroots organizations boost census response among their constituents, clients and congregations; a media campaign to help amplify the work in the field; and promotional materials such as bus advertisements, posters and videos appealing to historically undercounted population groups. We’re also encouraging organizations to become official census partners. These are trusted groups that can reach out to people they work with who might otherwise be missed – people in unsettled situations, people in isolated communities and people for whom language is a barrier.



PHILANTHROPY'S SUPPORT FOR CENSUS CAMPAIGNS IS VITAL

The Leadership Conference Education Fund's work is made possible by generous grants from several private and business foundations, and we are grateful for their partnership in this important campaign. For the 2010 census, funders have launched an unprecedented collaborative initiative to mobilize philanthropic resources for outreach and promotion and to support nonprofits in their quest to improve census accuracy in economically and socially disadvantaged and disengaged communities. This philanthropic aid has helped both national and community-based organizations build networks and share strategies and information, in a collective effort to tear down barriers to an accurate count.

But more needs to be done, and it is not too late for foundations to step in. Thousands of community groups are eager to play a role in promoting the census, but most lack the resources to develop and staff major activities. Ironically, foundations support the core work of many of these organizations, and they should recognize that an

inclusive census can enable grantees to provide services more effectively and to attract more government dollars. The very communities that philanthropy often targets for assistance are those most likely to be at risk of disproport-

ionate undercounting in the census: the poor, people of color, people with limited English proficiency, young children, the unemployed and frequently mobile, people without high school degrees and nontraditional households. Without an accurate enumeration of these segments of the population, we cannot know the true extent of need and conditions that require intervention and aid.

Philanthropy has been criticized for failing to offer sufficient support to African-American, Latino, Asian-American and other organizations led by and serving people of color. The census offers a win-win opportunity for everyone: Foundations can increase their support for underserved populations and advocates for these groups can implement robust outreach campaigns to reach communities most likely to be missed in the census. In the end, everyone – philanthropy, nonprofits and the people they both serve – benefits from the most fair and accurate census possible. ■

Wade Henderson is president and CEO of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.

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