

112TH CONGRESS
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H. CON. RES. 136

Expressing the sense of Congress that the census surveys and the information derived from those surveys are crucial to the national welfare.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AUGUST 2, 2012

Mrs. MALONEY (for herself, Mr. HONDA, Ms. CHU, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. OLVER, Ms. MCCOLLUM, Mr. SERRANO, Ms. RICHARDSON, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. STARK, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts, and Mr. GRIJALVA) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of Congress that the census surveys and the information derived from those surveys are crucial to the national welfare.

Whereas the American Community Survey (referred to in this preamble as the “ACS”) was launched in 2005 during the Administration of President George W. Bush and has since been funded by Congress as an innovation that the Bureau of the Census has been able to use in place of the decennial census long form;

Whereas the ACS provides the United States, States, counties, cities, towns, neighborhoods, and other areas with annual data that was formerly available only once every 10 years;

Whereas the Federal Government relies on the ACS—

(1) to produce annual population estimates for the United States, States, metropolitan areas, counties, cities, and other areas;

(2) to produce annual measures of total personal income and per capita income for the United States, States, metropolitan areas, and counties;

(3) to define metropolitan areas;

(4) to determine compliance with the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 1973 et seq.); and

(5) to fairly distribute more than \$450,000,000,000 in Federal domestic assistance to States and other areas, including through the setting of the formulas for Federal reimbursement to States for Medicaid expenditures;

Whereas the ACS is the only source of rural and small-area economic and demographic data of sufficient reliability to allow entrepreneurs, business owners, and local government planners, among others, to make informed decisions on where to invest, build, create jobs, and maintain or improve infrastructure;

Whereas Congress requires the information collected through the ACS in order to provide adequate oversight of a substantial number of executive departments, agencies, and programs;

Whereas the citizens of the United States require the information collected through the ACS for each State and congressional district in order to hold their Members of Congress accountable;

Whereas, since the founding of the United States, Congress has recognized the value and mandated the use of the decennial census as a means to gather information that in-

forms public policy and measures the progress of the United States;

Whereas the congressional tradition of the decennial census was initiated by the efforts of United States Representative James Madison, the “Father of the Constitution”, who argued on the floor of the House of Representatives that Congress, in considering the Act entitled “An Act providing for the enumeration of the Inhabitants of the United States” (commonly known as the “Census Act of 1790”; 1 Stat. 101, chapter 2), “had now an opportunity of obtaining the most useful information for those who should hereafter be called upon to legislate for their country if this bill was extended so as to embrace some other objects besides the bare enumeration of the inhabitants; it would enable them to adapt the public measures to the particular circumstances of the community. In order to know the various interests of the United States, it was necessary that the description of the several classes into which the community was divided, should be accurately known; on this knowledge the legislature might proceed to make a proper provision for the agricultural, commercial and manufacturing interests . . . in due proportion”;

Whereas Representative James Madison also said, “This kind of information all legislatures had wished for; but this kind of information had never been obtained in any country”; that he wished, therefore, “to avail himself of the present opportunity of accomplishing so valuable a purpose”; and “[i]f the plan was pursued in taking every future census, it would give [Congress] an opportunity of marking the progress of the society, and distinguishing the growth of every interest.”;

Whereas Vice President Thomas Jefferson, the “Father of the Declaration of Independence”, wrote Congress as president of the American Philosophical Society that the consideration by Congress of the Act entitled “An Act providing for the second Census or enumeration of the Inhabitants of the United States” (commonly known as the “Census Act of 1800”; 2 Stat. 11, chapter 12) offered “an occasion of great value, and not otherwise to be obtained, of ascertaining sundry facts highly important to society . . . [and] presenting a more detailed view of the inhabitants of the United States, under several different aspects,” including age (so as to be able to measure life expectancy), citizenship (so as to be able to determine the relative contributions of births and immigration to population growth), and the occupation of free males (so as to be able “to ascertain more completely the causes which influence life and health, and furnish a curious and useful document of the distribution of society in these States, and of the conditions and vocations of our fellow-citizens . . .”);

Whereas diverse presidents throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, such as John Quincy Adams, Martin Van Buren, William McKinley, Herbert Hoover, and Franklin Roosevelt, asked for and received from Congress permission to expand the scope of census questions unrelated to enumeration;

Whereas the Economic Census is required by law to be conducted every 5 years, provides the most authoritative and comprehensive data about United States businesses, and provides the foundation for key economic indicators, such as the gross domestic product;

Whereas, in response to the recommendations of the Intensive Review Committee (also known as the “Watkins Commission”), Congress enacted the recommendations into law in 1954, thereby providing for quinquennial censuses of manufacturing, mineral industries, and other businesses;

Whereas the finding of the Watkins Commission that “[w]ithout these census records, it would not be possible to construct or interpret this system of economic indicators. Business executives, farmers, labor leaders, professional men, scholars, scientists, government officials, and administrators in all phases of our society are dependent on census records or on economic indicators based on census records.” is as true today as it was in 1954;

Whereas the Economic Census—

- (1) provides the foundation for key annual, quarterly, and monthly Federal economic indicators, including the gross domestic product, industrial production, labor productivity, manufacturing and services industry activity, producer price indices, research and development expenditures, commodity flows, and employer-sponsored health insurance coverage;

- (2) provides the basis for Federal macroeconomic and budget projections; and

- (3) informs Federal trade, competitiveness, and entrepreneurship policies;

Whereas single firms rely on the Economic Census to compare their operations to industry averages, identify markets, and inform decisions on business location, capital investment, product research and development, and marketing strategies;

Whereas the information collected through the Economic Census affords the private and public sectors the ability

to make good decisions and use resources in a way such that the entire country is more efficient and better able to compete in the world economy, thereby allowing the United States to maintain a high standard of living;

Whereas what is today called the Economic Census began as the “census of manufactures” in 1810;

Whereas the census of manufactures (as well as the census of agriculture) became a regular feature of census taking in 1840 and has remained such ever since;

Whereas household and business responses to census surveys allow national, State, and local officials to make informed decisions, just as James Madison envisioned, providing timely and accurate statistics even for small localities;

Whereas, historically, Congress has followed the precedent set by all previous Congresses in supporting and directing the collection of a range of information in the ACS and the Economic Census to guide its own deliberations and consideration of policies;

Whereas Federal courts have consistently upheld the constitutionality of including questions unrelated to enumeration in the decennial census and requiring answers to such questions; and

Whereas Congress has mandated and the Department of Commerce has successfully implemented strict protection of the confidentiality of responses: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
2 *concurring), That Congress—*

3 (1) encourages the people of the United States
4 to fulfill their civic duty and follow the law by re-

1 sponding to all census surveys conducted by the Bu-
2 reau of the Census; and

3 (2) strongly encourages the Bureau of the Cen-
4 sus—

5 (A) to provide United States households
6 and businesses with information regarding the
7 community, economic, and fiscal benefits to be
8 gained from participation in the American Com-
9 munity Survey and the Economic Census;

10 (B) to use the most current methodologies
11 and technologies to reduce any burden of re-
12 sponding to the American Community Survey
13 and the Economic Census; and

14 (C) to continue, as the Bureau of the Cen-
15 sus has done throughout its history, to innovate
16 its methods, processes, and products, and thus
17 maintain the world-class standards that have
18 made the Bureau of the Census an inter-
19 national leader among statistical agencies.

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