

INFORMATION POLICY, CENSUS, NATIONAL ARCHIVES SUBCOMMITTEE
OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEE

JOINT HEARING WITH

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INSULAR AFFAIRS
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT
OF
THE HONORABLE DONNA M. CHRISTENSEN
CHAIRWOMAN

"Census Data: Special Issues Related to U.S. Territories."

WEDNESDAY, MAY 21, 2008
2154 RAYBURN HOB
10:00 A.M.

Thank you Chairman Clay:

Let me begin by extending my appreciation to you and Members of the Subcommittee on Information Policy, Census, and National Archives for agreeing to hold this joint hearing with the Subcommittee on Insular Affairs to gather testimony and discuss the absence of data collection in U.S. territories.

Mr. Chairman, given the distance and time zones that separate Washington DC from our U.S. territories, I want to also welcome those residents from the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands who have tuned in to listen to the broadcast of this hearing via the internet.

Today, we will hear from witnesses from two of the five U.S. territories. Each will offer their perspective on data collection, or lack thereof, in the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. It is my presumption that while there may be small differences, treatment of Virgin Islands is very similar to her sister territories of Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Marianas. Puerto Rico however, due in part to its size and also an executive order issued by President George Bush I, receives more state-like treatment.

At this time, I will note that invited representatives from the Pacific territories were unable to travel here to attend this hearing but have asked that their testimony be made part of this joint hearing record. If there are no objections, I would like to submit the testimonies of Governor Togiola Tulafono of American Samoa and Governor Felix Camacho of Guam.

Mr. Chairman, as both the Delegate from the U.S. Virgin Islands and Chairman of the Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, I often hear and join the chorus myself in the demand for equal treatment for fellow Americans not residing in one of our fifty states but residing instead in a state of limbo. The examples run the gamut; from grants to treaties; voting for the next president; or even voting on the floor of the House of Representatives.

In response to these demands for equal treatment, the work of our Subcommittee – much like yours - is tasked to investigate the problem and find the balance between what can be done versus what we feel needs to be done. We find more often than not, a willingness amongst honest brokers can find a path towards fairness.

I look forward to our first panel of witnesses in assisting our Subcommittees to understand the problem of excluding our U.S. territories in whole or in part from activities conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. How does this exclusion affect local decision making? How does it impact decisions at the national level? How does it affect funding important programs and services. Does it move our fellow Americans forward?

Our federal witnesses have a more difficult task of explaining why these areas are excluded. However we feel we can count on your open-mindedness and your expertise to help move us in a fairer direction.

Again, my deepest gratitude to you Chairman Clay for agreeing to this hearing.