

WELCOMING REMARKS AND TESTIMONY OF

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MAYOR PRO-TEM OF THE CITY SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

SUBMITTED TO

THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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

**HENRY B. GONZALEZ CONVENTION CENTER
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

MONDAY, JULY 9, 2007

CONCERNING - THE 2010 CENSUS

Chairman Clay, Ranking Minority Member Turner and Members of the Committee:

My name is Kevin Wolff, City Councilman for District 9, on behalf of the City of San Antonio, I would like to welcome and thank the House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on Information Policy, Census, and National Archives for this opportunity to examine plans on how the Census Bureau can work better with the City of San Antonio to ensure an accurate count in the 2010 Census. The City takes an active role in the legislative and regulatory process in Washington D.C. and we are honored that you have chosen our City as the site for this important hearing concerning the upcoming 2010 Census. We are very grateful for the leadership of our hometown Congressman, Charlie Gonzales, on the issue of the Census, and again thank this subcommittee for holding a field hearing in our great city.

San Antonio, with an estimated population of 1.3 million is the 7th largest city in the United States, and the 2nd largest in Texas. Ensuring the most complete count possible is important to San Antonio because it affects city, state, and federal political representation; federal and state funding of programs; economic development, planning for physical growth and delivery of health and human services.

In addition to our increasing growth rates and geographical size (472.9 square miles), our population characteristics also present unique challenges to the San Antonio Census count. Of special note:

- 1) Texas is now a majority-minority state, with an increasing diverse population. Texas has a minority population of 11.3 million, comprising 50.2 percent of its total population of 22.5 million. Following this trend San Antonio's minorities represent 68% of the city's population.
- 2) Currently Spanish speakers constitute a ratio of more than 1-in-10 U.S. household residents. San Antonio has a Hispanic population of 59%, and a significant number of Spanish speaking households.
- 3) Mail non-response was significant ranging 25-60% in areas with a median income below \$24,000 during the 1990 count. In 2000, San Antonian's had a median income of \$36,214 and 17% of the population below the poverty level. Based on this historic data, the potential for an undercount is apparent.

In a post-enumeration survey of the 1990 Census it was determined that approximately 39,166 persons or 3.9 % of the population in San Antonio was not counted. According to an estimate from the Texas State Attorney General's Office our community lost approximately \$142 million in federal and state funds over a ten-year period as a result of the 1990 undercount.

To boost response rates, the efforts of the Census Bureau's Publicity Office should be enhanced. For the 2000 Count, this office provided paid advertising, a census in schools program, a partnership program engaging businesses and community groups, and special events to promote outreach and response. San Antonio partnered with Bexar County to participate financially to support the promotion efforts. The Census Bureau's Publicity Office coordinated with our local complement – the San Antonio-Bexar County Complete Count Committee to spearhead a four point program:

- 1) A Public Awareness Program that focused on media, special events, newsletters of existing organizations, speakers pool, posters, flyers and mail outs
- 2) A Targeted Outreach Program that identified Target Areas; recruited outreach volunteers in existing organizations and volunteer centers; and promoted block walks to improve response rates
- 3) A Shelter Program that inventoried shelters and participated in surveys
- 4) Resource Development to identify specific resources needed to target the Census efforts to improve response rates and solicit resources (funds or in-kind) from subcommittees and affiliated organizations

Community partnerships were critical in the development of these programs. A mailing and contact list had contacts ranging from professional organizations, schools, colleges, universities, public utilities, media, military bases, elected and appointed officials, neighborhood and community groups, to faith-based organizations.

Of special note, the City recently initiated the Haven for Hope, a 10-year plan to end homelessness. This plan includes a multifunctional campus near downtown that will deliver comprehensive human services to address homelessness, in partnership with health and human service providers, local charities, and the private sector. This should provide an opportunity to obtain a more accurate count of our homeless citizens and assess their needs.

For the 2010 Census, the Complete Count Committee would continue its role in conducting promotional, educational and outreach activities to persuade people to be counted. Of particular concern will be increased outreach among the city's diverse population, low-income areas, and non-English speakers where the potential for an undercount exists.

Secondly, the Census Bureau should continue its move towards an electronic format to help ensure the accuracy of the census and improve efficiency in order to update its address list and spatial data (maps) as well as enumeration using hand-held computers and coordinates from the Global Positioning System (GPS).

In closing, the US Census Bureau should provide the most efficient and effective counting program for the 2010 Census: It should strive to:

- Improve coverage of the population and reduce the differential undercount;
- Improve the accuracy of responses and locating people geographically;

- Increase mail response rates;
- Maintain and refine an open process with all stakeholders;
- Use the most effective modes for responding to the census (Mail, No response Follow-up, Internet, Telephone Questionnaire Assistance, Be Counted forms);
- Increase the use and effectiveness of language assistance guides and non-English language questionnaires; and
- Ensure a diverse workforce and improve the effectiveness of recruiting, training, and pay strategies in obtaining the workforce needed to conduct field operations.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations. We look forward to partnering with the U.S. Census Bureau as well as with Bexar County, and our community and private sector partners to ensure an accurate count for the 2010 Census.

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