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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
FACSIMILE (202) 225-3974
MINORITY (202) 225-5051
TTY (202) 225-6862

www.house.gov/reform

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For more information, contact:
Karen Lightfoot at (202) 225-5051
Ben Chevat at (202) 225-7944
Craig Rasmussen at (202) 225-2406

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION IS FORCED TO RELINQUISH CENSUS DATA

Today, the Commerce Department released adjusted census data to Reps. Henry A. Waxman (D-CA), Wm. Lacy Clay (D-MO), Carolyn B. Maloney (D-NY), and the thirteen other Democratic members of the House Government Reform Committee.

The Census Bureau prepared a second set of "adjusted" data that used statistical techniques to correct for errors. The census initially missed over six million Americans and counted millions of other Americans twice. Until today, the Commerce Department had refused to release the adjusted data for political reasons, which led the members to file suit.

Rep. Waxman said, "The Commerce Department should have released the data over a year ago. The new census data is essential to understanding how errors in the census affect funding for cities, counties, and critical programs funded with federal dollars."

"The American people deserve to have the most accurate Census data available. Without this new information, millions of people — predominantly minorities and the poor — would not be counted on the 2000 census while millions more — predominantly affluent Americans — would be counted twice. It was unfortunate that we had to fight so hard to get this information, but now that we have, I hope we can use it to its fullest advantage," said Rep. Clay.

"We had to fight the Republicans to make it possible for a scientific census to be conducted, and then we had to fight to get the results of the census released. It is about time the American public gets to see what it paid for," said Rep. Maloney.

In May 2001, the 16 members filed suit in federal court in Los Angeles against the Secretary of Commerce in order to compel the Bush Administration to release the adjusted data from the 2000 census. The U.S. District Court in Los Angeles granted summary judgment in favor of Rep. Waxman and the other plaintiffs, and Secretary Evans appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. In a parallel proceeding within the Ninth Circuit, two Oregon state legislators filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) case for the same data. After losing the FOIA case in the Ninth Circuit, Secretary Evans has decided not to pursue either course of litigation and has turned over the Census data to both the Oregon legislators and the 16 members of Congress.

The Committee on Government Reform's minority investigative staff will be analyzing the data to see how errors in the census affect public policy. These findings and data will be reported to Congress and the public.