

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 24, 2008

The Honorable Carlos M. Gutierrez
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
14th & Constitution Ave N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are gravely concerned about the planning for the Decennial Census of 2010. Serious mismanagement, contractual issues, and some unanticipated operational changes have added an estimated \$3 billion to the life cycle costs and forced the Commerce Department to abandon its plans to utilize handheld computers for non-response follow up (NRFU) and to revert to paper-based data collection. Although we appreciate your efforts to address the crisis surrounding the 2010 Decennial and we acknowledge that some progress has been made, we are troubled that significant issues still remain to be confronted. Given the inherent time limitations, we encourage you to allow the Census Bureau professionals to focus on the most basic, practical approach to resolving ongoing problems.

As you know, the Census is a constitutionally mandated obligation of incomparable significance to the preservation of our democracy, representative fairness, and the equitable distribution of an estimated \$300 billion in federal funds (including vital programs like Medicaid, the State Children's Health Insurance Program, the Federal-Aid Highway Program, Federal Transit Formula Grants, Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, the Community Block Development Grant Program, Title I Education Grants, and Head Start). Census data is crucial to understanding America's communities and ultimately ensuring fair representation in government and an equitable allocation of resources. Congress expects that the 2010 Decennial Census count every person living in the United States, any territory or possession of the United States, or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and all federal civilian and military personnel serving abroad. The Department of Commerce should use all reasonable means to ensure we have a complete and accurate count of every resident.

Your leadership in providing support and assistance for the Census Bureau is vital to the success of the 2010 Decennial. We expect that the additional funding provided in the fiscal year 2008 supplemental will allow the Census Bureau to improve its management of associated contracts. We expect to receive regular and timely progress reports, as well as updates on major decisions, including: the cost and scope of contracts with the Harris Corporation for Field Data Collection Automation, Address Canvassing, the Operating Control System, and the Regional Census Centers' infrastructure; fingerprinting plans; and any other major contracts and problems that arise. And we expect you to permit the Census Bureau to focus on execution unfettered of political interference.


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The 2010 Decennial Census is fast approaching and at this late date the Department cannot afford to implement new unproven strategies, including a sweepstakes or other incentives in the hopes of enticing more Americans to participate. Not only are such ideas operationally unsound at this very late date, studies show that adoption of such unproven measures could undermine cooperation with the census and all other surveys across the entire government by raising expectations that Americans should be paid or rewarded to do their civic duty. We need a 2010 Census that enjoys the confidence of the public and the Congress.

Therefore, we expect the Department to focus on fundamental tasks of raising awareness of the census, achieving the most complete address list possible, getting the highest mail back response rate of the census form possible, training and employing a dedicated, enthusiastic, and diverse workforce to do the follow up work necessary to count everyone including contacting all households that do not return a census form, and providing a vigorous quality check on all census operations and the data obtained. The Department must utilize robust, effective outreach and partnerships, including programs like the Census in the Schools, and appropriate national and targeted advertising to educate Americans about the importance of fulfilling their civic duty by filling out their census forms. These steps will help ensure the accurate enumeration of historically hard-to-count populations, including racial and ethnic minorities, language minorities, immigrants and low income households, and help avoid a potentially catastrophic undercount.

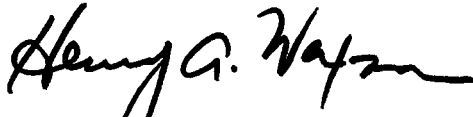
While most Americans are not yet thinking about the next decennial, these next few months are critical to ensuring that we do not have a failed census. We expect that you share our concerns and goals regarding the 2010 Decennial Census and that you will do all that is in your power to ensure that this most fundamental civic obligation is equitably and successfully managed. The decennial census is simply too important for failure to be an option and we look forward to working with you to guarantee an accurate 2010 Census.

Sincerely,



STENY H. HOYER
Majority Leader

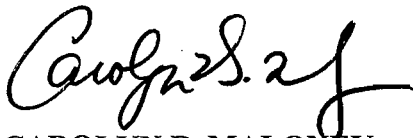
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On Oversight and
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Subcommittee on
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CAROLYN B. MALONEY
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**C.A. "DUTCH"
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Member of Congress



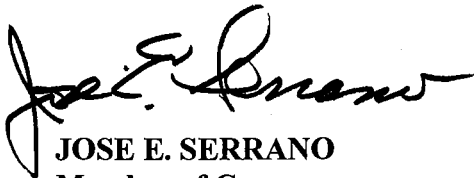
CAROLYN KILPATRICK
Chairman, Congressional
Black Caucus



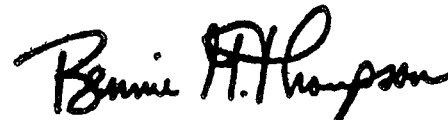
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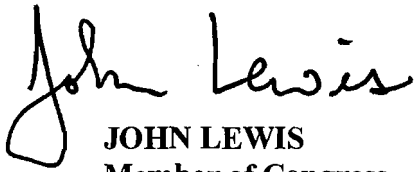
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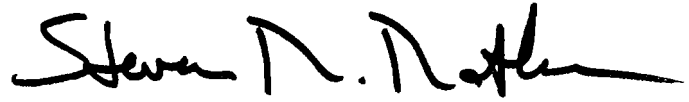
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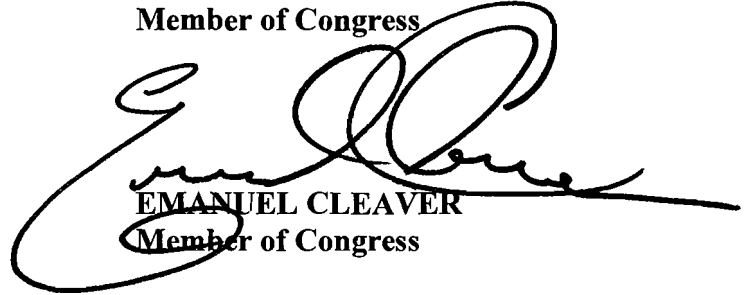
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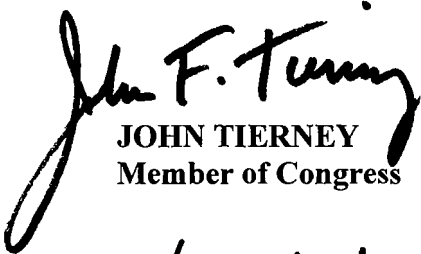
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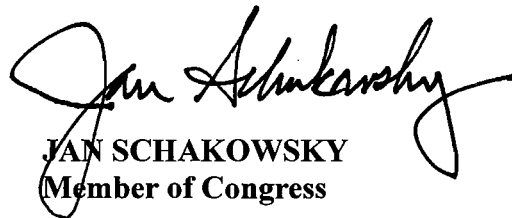
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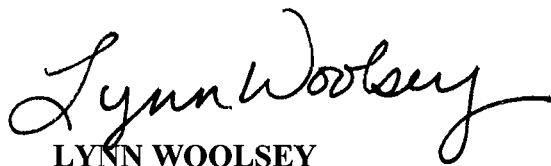
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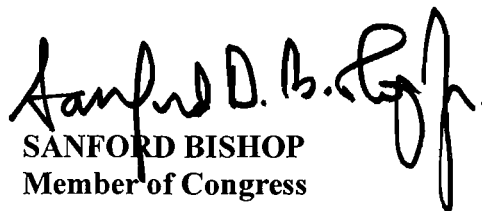
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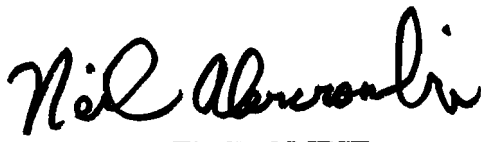
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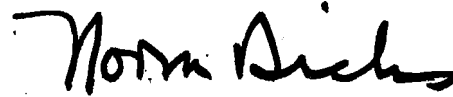
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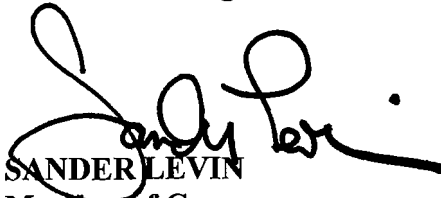
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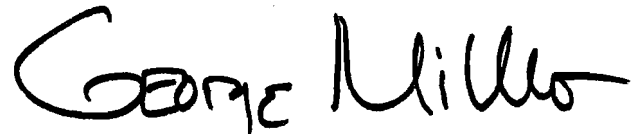
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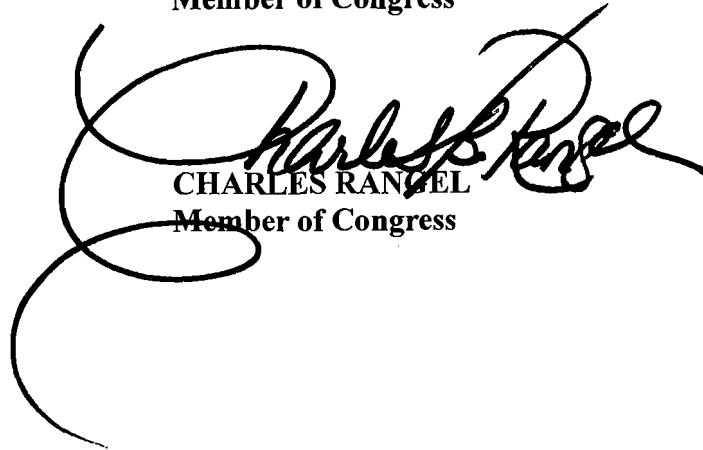
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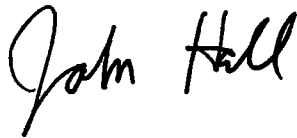
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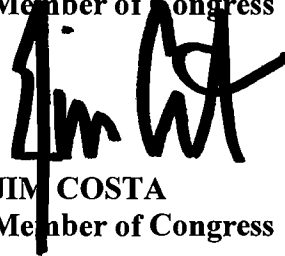
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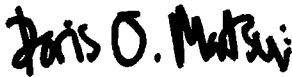
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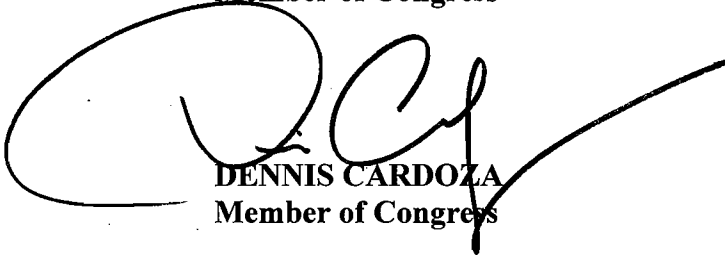
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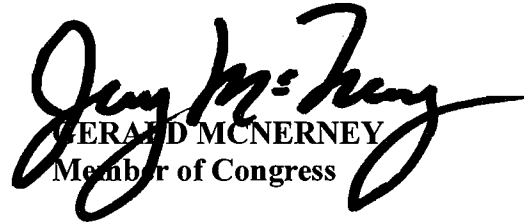
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