

## U.S. Census Bureau: Funding for the American Community Survey and 2012 Economic Census

The U.S. Census Bureau helps drive smart public policy and business investments by producing quality data about the nation's people and economy. One of the Census Bureau's key products is the American Community Survey (ACS), an ongoing survey that provides critical population data every year. The resulting data gives policymakers and communities the current information they need to plan more than \$400 billion of federal and state investments. The Census Bureau asks about age, sex, race, family relationships, income and benefits, health insurance, education and more. Every question asked by the ACS is necessary to provide data for programs mandated by Congress and every question is vetted by Congress. The resulting statistics guide the fair distribution of federal and state funds; aid federal, state and local governments in evaluating programs and plan effectively for schools, transportation, hospitals and other essential services; and assist businesses in identifying markets and making smart investments.

The Economic Census is the official measure of American business and the economy. Every five years it collects reliable, consistent and comprehensive business statistics on over 1,000 industries and over 15,000 products. The Economic Census gathers data at a level of detail that no other survey can match. Its data are essential to understanding our economy and serve as critical inputs into fiscal, monetary and trade policy.

On May 10, 2012, the House of Representatives approved the Fiscal Year 2013 Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) appropriations bill (H.R. 5326) with amendments that defund the American Community Survey and eliminate the 2012 Economic Census. The House bill will hurt policymakers, business and community leaders and researchers who seek to understand the patterns and trends of American communities and families and plan for the future.

### **The American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) urges Senators to support higher levels of funding for the Census Bureau in the FY 2013 Commerce, Justice and Science appropriations bill because:**

- **The federal government has long recognized the need to collect demographic information about Americans.** Some ACS questions have been asked since the census began in 1790. Today, the annual ACS is the *only* source of small-area statistics covering demographic, social, economic and housing information. The Economic Census provides detailed information on American businesses and the economy, and is the unique source for reliable, consistent and comprehensive measures of American business performance.
- **Defunding the ACS and 2012 Economic Census is shortsighted.** As Census director Robert Groves said in a video on his blog, "This [House] bill thus devastates the nation's statistical information about the status of the economy and the larger society." In addition, the Census Bureau has already built the information technology infrastructure and printed the 7.5 million forms necessary to carry out the 2012 Economic Census. If the Census is not conducted, 226 million taxpayer dollars will be wasted.
- **The ACS and Economic Census have bipartisan support.** As the *Washington Post* editorial board (May 15, 2012) said, "Even extreme fiscal conservatives should want the Census Bureau's information, so they know what is most sensible to cut." The Chamber of Commerce and economists at the Cato Institute, American Enterprise Institute and The Heritage Foundation have also spoken out in support of funding the ACS and Economic Census. AALL joins those organizations in opposing the elimination of these vital programs.