



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, DC 20233-0001
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

AUG 13 2009

The Honorable Patrick McHenry
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Information Policy,
Census, and National Archives
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-6143

Dear Representative McHenry:

I appreciate the opportunity to respond to your August 10, 2009, letter regarding the U.S. Census Bureau's partnership with ACORN, and your continuing efforts to reassure all Americans that the 2010 Decennial Census is important, easy, and confidential.

As you know, the materials obtained in the Freedom of Information Act request by Judicial Watch were released to the public and posted on their Web site on May 29, 2009. They are not new materials, but were in the public domain prior to the letter sent to you by Acting Director Thomas L. Mesenbourg on July 11, 2009, and well before we met in your office on July 29, 2009, to discuss these matters.

While the Census Bureau's standard partnership agreement gives each group the opportunity to help in a variety of ways, the Census Bureau makes the final determination in each case as to which of those options in each case will provide the most benefit to promoting public awareness and cooperation with the decennial census. Our partnership agreement is neither a contract nor does it spell out in detail the full terms of the proposed partnership activity. It is simply an expression of the willingness of our partners to offer their help to fulfill the Nation's Constitutional mandate to count every person in America next April.

After a partnership is formed, Census Bureau staffs in our regions or headquarters engage in further discussions about the nature, scope, and scale of the role each partner is willing and able to undertake and afford. In the case of ACORN, Mr. Mesenbourg's letter is consistent with this routine and made clear that the Census Bureau has agreed that ACORN can assist in helping promote awareness of the census to hard to count communities they serve. His letter is consistent and offers no contradiction. Census Bureau staff telephoned ACORN staff and alerted them to this decision, as well as Mr. Mesenbourg's letter to you.

Any individual who seeks employment as part of our decennial temporary work force must first pass a basic exam and be cleared through an F.B.I. background name check and a fingerprint check. They then must go through our training process and will be given a caseload to complete only if they successfully complete training. We employ multiple quality control checks for every worker, including checking a percentage of all their work for accuracy and completeness. We also employ statistical methods to detect errors or fraud. If we find any fraudulent work, the employee is terminated and the work redone by other staff.

The Honorable Patrick McHenry

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We are working hard on our goal to have more than 100,000 partner organizations assist us in raising awareness of Census 2010. As you know, every one percentage increase in the mail back response rate saves taxpayers between \$80 and \$100 million dollars. Nothing could make our job easier, or our results more accurate than for every household in America to simply mail back their form. That would avoid the need for any enumerator to knock on anyone's door in order to get a complete count. We believe that our partnership effort will assist us in meeting that goal.

If you have any additional questions, please have a member of your staff contact our Congressional Affairs Office at (301) 763-6100.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert M. Groves". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "R".

Robert M. Groves
Director

Census Control No. 53301

Draft:S. Jost:8/11/09

CQAS:Review:msw:8/11/09

CQAS:Final:nth:8/12/09

cc: A. Moxam, T. Johnson, N. Gordon, H. Hogan, M. Matos, CAO