December 10, 2010

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Boehner
Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Edolphus Towns
Chairman, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Darrell Issa
Ranking Member, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lacy Clay
Chairman, Subcommittee on Information Policy, Census and National Archives
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader Boehner, Chairman Towns, Ranking Member Issa, Chairman Clay, and Ranking Member McHenry,

With Senate passage of the "Census Oversight Efficiency and Management Reform Act of 2010" (S. 3167/H.R. 4945) by unanimous consent on December 8, we write to urge swift bipartisan passage of the Senate-approved bill in order for it to reach the President's desk by year's end. The bill represents an unprecedented opportunity to enact reasonable administrative reforms and grant the Census Bureau Director new authorities to run the agency more efficiently, openly, and authoritatively, all at no additional cost to the taxpayer.

In particular, we support the bill's proposal to create a five-year Presidential appointment for the Census Director. This important change would allow the Census Bureau to avoid disruptions caused by changes in administration, especially around the period of the decennial census. Enactment of the legislation in 2012 would mean that, under normal circumstances, a change in Directors would occur on a predictable schedule in years two and seven of each decade. We anticipate that the fixed term will translate to a higher level of continuity and professional independence in the Bureau's operations. For example, a fixed term would help avoid the circumstances in both 1999 and 2009, when the Census Bureau operated without a Senate-confirmed leader during final preparations for the decennial census.

We also support the bill's components to strengthen the director's position by establishing a direct line of reporting to the Secretary of Commerce, more latitude in communication with Congress, and generally more authority over the Census Bureau, including its personnel and operations. We believe these components will improve the Census Bureau's ability to respond to requests from Congress and the wide range of important data users in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

Finally, let us emphasize the importance of enacting this bill promptly, since planning for the 2020 decennial census is already underway.

We thank you for your leadership on issues important to preserving and enhancing the mission of the U.S. Census Bureau.

American Association for Public Opinion Research
American Planning Association
American Sociological Association
American Statistical Association
Arab American Institute Foundation
Asian American Justice Center
Association of Population Centers
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics
Demos
Japanese American Citizens League
Latino Census Network
Marketing Research Association
National Association of Home Builders
National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund
National Education Association
National Institute for Latino Policy
Nonprofit Voter Engagement Network
OCA
Population Association of America (PAA)
Population Reference Bureau
Population Resource Center
Prison Policy Initiative
Project Vote
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
Southeast Michigan Census Council
Southern Demographic Association
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

cc: The Honorable Steny Hoyer, The Honorable Carolyn Maloney; The Honorable Charles Dent