

September 23, 2008

To: **Carolyn Maloney**, Member of the House of Representatives

From: **Vincent P. Barabba** (1973-76 and 1979-81)*

Bruce Chapman (1981-1983)

John G. Keane (1984 – 1987)

Barbara Everitt Bryant (1989 -1993)

Martha Farnsworth Riche (1994-1998)

Kenneth Prewitt (1998-2001)

Charles Louis Kincannon (2002 - 2008)

*Years of service as Director of the U. S. Census Bureau

The signatures to this Letter served as Director of the U.S. Census Bureau, appointed by Presidents Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, G. H. Bush, Bill Clinton, and G. W. Bush. Although appointed by different Presidents we are of one mind in our strong endorsement of the proposed legislation known as “Restoring the Integrity of American Statistics Act of 2008” that will establish the Census Bureau as an Independent Agency. We believe that this is an Act whose time has come, and that its enactment will ensure that the Census Bureau can discharge its constitutional obligation to conduct the Decennial Census and carry out other statistical operations – such as the Economic Census and the Census of Governments – that the Congress requires and the nation needs.

We offer three reasons for our endorsement. First, following three decades during which the press and the Congress frequently discussed the Decennial Census in explicitly partisan terms it is vitally important that the American public have confidence that the census results have been produced by an independent, non-partisan, apolitical, and scientific Census Bureau.”

Second, the Commerce Department is responsible for many activities and several very large agencies. For the Commerce Department, the importance of the Census Bureau waxes and wanes, peaking as the Decennial approaches but then drifting down the Department’s priority list. The Census Bureau, however, conducts extensive preparatory activities for the Decennial Census during the entire decade preceding it. It also has other major statistical responsibilities in the years that intervene between Decennial Censuses – including producing the nation’s ongoing economic monitoring measures. As an Independent Agency it will more efficiently focus on these continuous responsibilities.

Third, as Directors each of us experienced times when we could have made much more timely and thorough responses to Congressional requests and oversight if we had dealt directly with the Congress.

The Census Bureau is the nation's largest, general-purpose statistical agency. Establishing it as an Independent Agency, in the government's highly decentralized system of statistical programs, will be broadly beneficial to other statistical agencies and programs in emphasizing that the nation's statistical products are scientific and independent of partisan considerations. This is a valuable signal for the American public in a time of economic uncertainty and the corresponding high level of dependence on the numbers generated by the federal statistical system.

We congratulate you and your colleagues for initiating the Bill, and offer our services in any way that you might find useful.