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Congress of the United States
Congressional Sunbelt Caucus

For immediate release
 August 19, 1994

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Sunbelt Caucus Members Call on President to Let Court Ruling on Census Count Stand

(Washington, D.C.) -- In a letter, 32 members of the Congressional Sunbelt Caucus called on the president to let stand a federal Circuit Court panel's decision to include the undercounted population in the official 1990 Census population figures. The decision was in response to a lawsuit filed by New York and joined by cities and states throughout the Sunbelt. The issue is of vital interest to the region, as almost half of those not counted by the Census Bureau live in the 17 Sunbelt states.

The number of Sunbelt residents missed -- 1.8 million -- is equal to the official populations of Delaware, North Dakota and Vermont combined.

The Sunbelt Caucus members are asking the president to let stand a recent decision by the Second Circuit Court to overturn a lower court ruling that let the Census figures remain unadjusted. At this time, the administration could appeal this decision, defend the original decision not to adjust, negotiate with the plaintiffs or adjust the Official 1990 Census figures.

This is an issue that has concerned the Sunbelt region for many years. In 1991, then-Governor Clinton joined his Southern colleagues in a letter to the Bureau of the Census urging the Bureau to use the adjusted figures. Congressman Jim Moran of Virginia has introduced legislation to use adjusted figures in every major program that relies on population estimates.

Failure to win adjustment of the census has meant a continuing hardship for Sunbelt state and regional officials. Each year, the federal government distributes billions of dollars based on the population of each state. Because these numbers use the unadjusted, inaccurate population figures, millions of dollars are incorrectly distributed. Every day, our region's state and local governments struggle to serve their actual numbers of residents, while they receive funds based on the inaccurate numbers adopted by the Census Bureau for the "official" counts.

This is not just a regional issue. In addition to the primary plaintiff, New York, cities and states across the country joined this suit. In each area, thousands of people were missed by

(more)

the Census Bureau in its original mail survey. Without adjustment, every state and city with a significant undercount is denied its fair share of federal funds. Over the decade, this will add up to billions of dollars.

The Sunbelt letter asks, "What is the intent and purpose of federal funding that has a population component other than to assist state and local governments in serving their actual number of residents? This is strictly a fairness issue."

The Congressional Sunbelt Caucus is a bi-partisan coalition of 158 members of the U.S. House of Representatives and 34 members of the Senate from 17 Southern and Southwestern states. The Sunbelt Caucus seeks to serve Members of Congress by promoting the interests of the region through monitoring of issues and legislation, policy analysis, and development of legislative proposals. The Caucus defines the Sunbelt region as Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.

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Those signing the letter are:

Rep. Jim Moran, Virginia
 Rep. Frank Tejeda, Texas
 Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Florida
 Rep. Sam Coppersmith, Arizona
 Rep. Mike Parker, Mississippi
 Rep. Herbert Bateman, Virginia
 Rep. Jim Bacchus, Florida
 Rep. Martin Frost, Texas
 Rep. Jimmy Hayes, Louisiana
 Carolina
 Rep. Floyd Spence, South Carolina
 Rep. David Price, North Carolina
 Rep. Buddy Darden, Georgia
 Rep. Ralph M. Hall, Texas
 Sen. John Warner, Virginia
 Rep. E. "Kika" de la Garza, Texas
 Rep. Roy Rowland, Georgia

Rep. Mike Andrews, Texas
 Rep. Don Johnson, Georgia
 Rep. Bill Sarpalius, Texas
 Rep. Bud Cramer, Alabama
 Rep. Glen Browder, Alabama
 Rep. Billy Tauzin, Louisiana
 Rep. Greg Laughlin, Texas
 Rep. Earl Hutto, Florida
 Sen. Strom Thurmond, South
 Carolina
 Sen. Thad Cochran, Mississippi
 Sen. Jeff Bingaman, New Mexico
 Sen. Lauch Faircloth, North Carolina
 Sen. Connie Mack, Florida
 Sen. Pete Domenici, New Mexico
 Rep. Clay Shaw, Florida
 Sen. J. Bennett Johnston

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August 18, 1994

President William Jefferson Clinton
 The White House
 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
 Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Clinton:

Recently, a Federal Appeals Court panel in New York issued an historic decision. The three-judge panel ruled that after decades of missing large segments of the population, the Bureau of the Census must include these populations in the official decennial counts of the U.S. population. If this stands, 4 million people would be added to the baseline 1990 population and billions of federal dollars will finally be used for the people they were intended to serve.

This issue has been of vital interest to the 17 states in the Sunbelt region for many years. In August 1992 as Governor of Arkansas, you joined your fellow Southern governors in sending a letter to the Director of the Bureau of the Census expressing "support for a statistical adjustment to the intercensal population estimates." The letter went on to state, "to fail to make this adjustment would be to consciously decide to adopt an inaccurate base for intercensal population estimates."

Failure to adjust the census count meant denying the existence of 4 million people. It also has meant that federal funds did not follow the significant population shifts of the 1980s. The 17-state Sunbelt region is home to one third of the nation, but is it also home to almost half of those people who the Census Bureau failed to count in the 1990 Official Census. The Sunbelt residents who were missed equal the population of Delaware, North Dakota, and Vermont combined. In Texas alone, more were missed than live in Wyoming.

Failure to adjust the census has also meant a continuing hardship for our state and local officials. In each year of the decade, the decision affects every child sitting in a classroom, every person driving on a highway, every person filing for unemployment, every state or local government applying for revenue bonds, every elderly person needing health care, every local government working to clean its air, and every police force fighting crime. Each day, our region's state and local governments struggle to serve their actual number of residents, while they receive funds based on the inaccurate population counts in the Official Census count.

One must ask: what is the intent and purpose of federal funding that has a population component other than to assist state and local governments in serving their actual number of residents? This is strictly a fairness issue.

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You have the opportunity to correct this error-ridden count. The General Accounting Office (GAO) found that the 1990 Census was the first Census since 1940 that failed to improve on its predecessor; in addition, the GAO tells us that the 1990 Official Census had at least 14 million errors. The U.S. Court of Appeals panel has found that there was no basis for the Census not to be adjusted. The Census Bureau is required to seek accuracy, as nearly as is possible. The inclusion of the undercount numbers will finally make accuracy in the 1990 Census possible. The adjusted census numbers guarantee that states, cities and counties will finally receive their fair share.

As members of the Congressional Sunbelt Caucus, we strongly urge you to let the Appeals Court decision stand.

Sincerely,

Jim Moran

Frank Javita

Laura Ros-Lehtinen

Sam Caggs Smith

Mike Park

Mark W. Bators

Jim Baucus

Mark V. ...

Michael L. ...

Don Johnson

Bill ...

Bob ...

Deen Browder

Billy Taylor

Greg Laughlin

Carl ...

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Jim Hyman
Lloyd Spence
Jack Price
Bruce Darden
Robert Hall
John Warner
Kirk DeLaGorge
Bob Boulton

Strom Thurmond
Paul Robeson
Allyson
Paul Hainbock
Connie Mack
Pete Domenici
E. Clay Shaw, Jr.
Ben Rayburn