

CENSUS IN THE SCHOOLS PROMOTION ACT

APRIL 26, 1999.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. BURTON of Indiana, from the Committee on Government Reform, submitted the following

REPORT

together with

MINORITY VIEWS

[To accompany H.R. 1058]

[Including cost estimate of the Congressional Budget Office]

The Committee on Government Reform, to whom was referred the bill (H.R. 1058) to promote greater public participation in decennial censuses by providing for the expansion of the educational program commonly referred to as the “Census in Schools Project”, having considered the same, report favorably thereon without amendment and recommend that the bill do pass.

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I. SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION

H.R. 1058, the "Census in the Schools Promotion Act," promotes greater participation in the decennial census by providing for the expansion of the Census Bureau's "Census in the Schools Project." Under the current program design, the Bureau will send invitations to all principals, but to teachers in only 40 percent of the schools. H.R. 1058 would simply require that the Census Bureau send an invitation-to-participate to elementary teachers and secondary math and social studies teachers in all communities, rather than only in the targeted areas.

II. BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR LEGISLATION

Children were one of the most severely undercounted groups in the 1990 Census. It is the goal of Congress to reduce this undercount for the 2000 Census. The Census in the Schools Project, developed by Scholastic, Inc., aims to increase participation in the 2000 Census by engaging parents through schools and through the involvement of children and teens.

A teaching guide and in-class and take-home student materials have been developed. The project helps students learn about the census and why it is important to them. Schools may be the only institutions that maintain a relationship with a broad cross-section of families with children. Furthermore, educating our children about the importance of the census is an investment in response rates for future censuses.

The Census in the Schools project is also a promising instrument for reaching many hard-to-count or special populations. The Census Bureau has realized the benefit of sending invitations directly to teachers and has expanded the program from its original design. The benefits of sending invitations to all teachers will outweigh the marginal costs of doing so. Congressional involvement is needed to expand the program so that all teachers receive an invitation to participate directly.

III. LEGISLATIVE HEARINGS AND COMMITTEE ACTIONS

H.R. 1058 was introduced on March 10, 1999, by the Honorable Dan Miller (R-FL). The bill was referred to the Committee on Government Reform on March 10, 1999. On March 17, 1999, the Committee on Government Reform met to consider the bill. Mrs. Norton (D-DC) offered an amendment to require the Secretary of Commerce to provide a written invitation to participate in the program to the head of each elementary school and secondary school. The amendment offered by Mrs. Norton (D-DC) failed by recorded vote, 20 ayes, 21 nays. The committee approved the bill by voice vote. The committee then favorably reported the bill to the House by voice vote.

IV. COMMITTEE HEARINGS AND WRITTEN TESTIMONY

The committee held no hearings and received no written testimony on H.R. 1058. The Subcommittee on the Census held a hearing on March 2, 1999, entitled "Examining the America Counts Today (ACT) Initiatives to Enhance Traditional Enumeration

Methods,” where Dr. Kenneth Prewitt, Director of the Census Bureau, supported an effort to reach 100 percent of schools.

V. EXPLANATION OF THE BILL

Section. 1—The short title is the “Census in the Schools Promotion Act.”

Sec. 2—Subsection (a) lists the following Congressional findings:

(1) The project is an effective way to educate the Nation’s youth about the importance of the census to a democratic society.

(2) Our schools may be the only institution that maintains a continuing relationship with a broad cross-section of this Nation’s families with children.

(3) Educating the children is an investment that will promote greater levels of public participation, especially in the hardest-to-count communities, not only in the 2000 census, but censuses thereafter.

(4) The Bureau has indicated it will not be able to implement the program more broadly without additional funding.

Subsection (b) designates the purpose of the Act is to promote greater participation in decennial censuses by expanding the Census in the Schools Project.

Sec. 3—This section requires the Secretary of Commerce to expand the existing program. The Secretary is instructed to ensure that a written invitation is provided to the head of each elementary school and each secondary school, to each elementary school teacher, and to each secondary school teacher of mathematics, geography, or social studies. This section also requires the Secretary to make available, upon acceptance of such invitation, grade-appropriate teaching guides, student materials, or other information or materials determined by the Secretary.

Sec. 4—This section permits the Secretary of Commerce to prescribe any regulations necessary to carry out this Act.

VI. COMPLIANCE WITH RULE XIII

Pursuant to rule XIII, clause 3(c)(1) of the Rules of the House of Representatives, under the authority of rule X, clause 2(b)(1) and clause 3(e), the results and findings from committee oversight activities are incorporated in the bill and this report.

VII. BUDGET ANALYSIS AND PROJECTIONS

The budget analysis and projections required by section 308(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 are contained in the estimate of the Congressional Budget Office.

VIII. COST ESTIMATE OF THE CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE

U.S. CONGRESS,
 CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,
 Washington, DC, April 12, 1999.

Hon. DAN BURTON,
 Chairman, Committee on Government Reform,
 House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Congressional Budget Office has prepared the enclosed cost estimate for H.R. 1058, the Census in the Schools Promotion Act.

If you wish further details on this estimate, we will be pleased to provide them. The CBO staff contact is Megan Carroll.

Sincerely,

BARRY B. ANDERSON
 (For Dan L. Crippen, Director).

Enclosure.

H.R. 1058—Census in the Schools Promotion Act

The Census in the Schools Promotion Act, implemented by the Bureau of the Census within the Department of Commerce, is designed to promote participation in decennial censuses by offering federally funded educational materials about the census to certain educators. According to Scholastic Inc., the publishing firm under contract to develop teaching materials for the project, the Bureau of the Census invites about 40 percent of all elementary and secondary school administrators, elementary school teachers, and secondary school teachers of math, geography, and social studies to participate in the project. H.R. 1058 would require the Secretary of Commerce to provide written invitations to all such educators.

According to the Department of Commerce, \$18.5 million of its appropriation for fiscal year 1999 was allocated to the Census in Schools Project. Based on information provided by the department and Scholastic Inc., CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 1058 would increase discretionary spending by \$6 million in fiscal year 2000, assuming appropriation of the amount necessary to cover the cost of the additional invitations and subsequent mailings of the educational materials.

H.R. 1058 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act. Any costs incurred by state, local or tribal governments as a result of participation in this program would be voluntary.

The CBO staff contact is Megan Carroll. This estimate was approved by Paul N. Van de Water, Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

IX. SPECIFIC CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY FOR THIS LEGISLATION

Clause 3 of Article 1, section 2 and clauses 1 and 18 of Article 1, section 8 of the Constitution grant Congress the power to enact this law.

X. COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

On March 17, 1999, a quorum being present, the Committee on Government Reform ordered the bill favorably reported.

XI. CONGRESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT; PUBLIC LAW 104-1

The original Act does not apply to the House of Representatives or to the Senate, thus H.R. 1058 does not apply to Congress.

XII. UNFUNDED MANDATES REFORM ACT; PUBLIC LAW 104-4, SECTION
423

The committee finds that the legislation does not impose any Federal mandates within the meaning of section 423 of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (PL 104-4).

XIII. FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACT (5 U.S.C. APP.) SECTION 5(B)

The committee finds that section 5(b) of Title 5 App., United States Code, is not applicable because this legislation does not authorize the establishment of any advisory committee.

MINORITY VIEWS

H.R. 1058, the "Census in the Schools Promotion Act," requires a written invitation to participate in the "Census in the Schools Project" to be sent to the head of every elementary and secondary school in the nation, to every elementary school teacher, and to every secondary school teacher whose primary duties involve mathematics, geography, or social studies. Upon acceptance of the invitation, the Census Bureau is required to provide a set of instructional materials without charge.

The idea behind this bill is a good one. Encouraging the participation of our nation's children and educators in the civic ritual of the census is a sound goal. It is, therefore, disappointing that the majority has held no hearings or a subcommittee markup of this legislation. Indeed, it was introduced on March 10, 1999, just one week before the full Committee markup. There has also apparently been no discussion with the contractor which must carry out the provisions of this bill to ensure that the contractor has the needed resources to meet this 150% increase in the program. We would not want to duplicate the experience of 1990, when many of the materials for schools arrived well after the census and were just thrown away.

The "Census in the Schools Project" as originally designed by the Census Bureau targeted 20% of the schools with the highest net undercounts, was later expanded to 40%, and the Bureau plans further expansion. Congress should not be micro-managing this program. This bill requires the Census Bureau to send out well over 2 million letters to teachers across the country, then wait for a positive response before sending census information to that teacher. As a result, the Bureau may well have to make dozens of individual mailings to the same school district when one mailing would do. This may not be the most sound approach, but it is impossible to determine the best approach without the benefit of hearings.

There are other serious problems with H.R. 1058. It requires a 150% increase in printing costs for the "Census in the Schools Project." There is no money in the 1999 budget to pay for that. During the full Committee markup, Rep. Miller assured the Committee that the money would be forthcoming. We are not aware, however, of any concrete step taken to address this budget concern.

Once the money is there to pay for the printing, the Census Bureau must negotiate a new printing contract with GPO. When the Census Bureau increased the school coverage from 20% to 40%, renegotiating the printing contract took six weeks. If the majority is serious about this program, there should be specific instructions in the bill to use the existing contracting authority. Writing legislation on contracting is complicated, and should not be done haphazardly.

Rep. Maloney offered an amendment to H.R. 1058 which called for the Census Bureau to contact all schools, but left it to the professionals at the Census Bureau to determine the best way to do that. The amendment also authorized such sums as necessary to pay for the bills requirements. Unfortunately, the amendment was defeated on a party-line vote.

HENRY A. WAXMAN.
TOM LANTOS.
BOB WISE.
MAJOR R. OWENS.
EDOLPHUS TOWNS.
PAUL E. KANJORSKI.
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