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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. PETRI).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
May 12, 1998.

I hereby designate the Honorable THOMAS E. PETRI to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 21, 1997, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) for 5 minutes.

CONCERNS ABOUT A FAILED CENSUS IN YEAR 2000

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to raise concerns that we are moving toward a failed census in year 2000. For over 200 years this country has conducted a decennial census, starting back with Thomas Jefferson in 1790, to count all Americans. The purpose of this census is fundamental to our democracy in this country because it is the one man/one vote belief. The only way you know you have the one man/one vote philosophy is you have to count people every 10 years.

This is the basis of elected representatives, whether it is the school board or Members of the House of Representatives, so it is so critical that we do that. Also, billions and billions of dollars that flow out of Washington or out of State capitols are based upon census information, so it is absolutely critical that we have a census that is conducted in year 2000 as one that is the most accurate possible, and as one that is trusted and believed in by the American people.

However, for the year 2000 census, the Clinton administration has proposed a radical new idea. Without the approval of Congress, they do not want to count everybody now. They have all these smart people here in Washington with all these big computers. They say we are going to use sampling and we are going to estimate the population. So for the first time in history, they are going to count less than the full population of this country, and this is where the risk is so great.

The General Accounting Office, which is the auditor for the Federal Government, a nonpartisan organization here in Washington, D.C., has said we are moving toward a failed census. Every report they have issued, they have said—the most recent one being in March—that the risk of failure has increased because they have developed this complex scheme that many of us believe cannot be completed. Even if it is completed, it will not be trusted by the American people.

We believe that the President is trying to use more political science than empirical science in developing this plan. Last week we had a hearing on the subcommittee with oversight of the census. There were two fact points I think we learned at that hearing. First was the fact that the 1990 census was not that bad of a census. It was the second most accurate census in history. But the second part of that census, which was dealing with sampling and adjustment, was a failure.

Let me explain that in a little more detail. The way they conducted the 1990 census is they went out and did an enumeration of the entire population of this country and counted 98.4 percent of the people; again, not a bad count, the second most accurate in history. Then they conducted a sample of 150,000 households. They were going to use that to adjust the total population they have just counted.

The attempt at sampling was a failure. Fortunately they did not use it, because if they had used it, for example, the original recommendation from the Census Bureau was to take a congressional seat away from the State of Pennsylvania. They find out 2 years later there was a computer mix-up that gave them the erroneous information, so they would have taken representation away from a State, Pennsylvania, falsely, because of computer error.

They also found it was less accurate when we deal with populations under 100,000. So for communities under 100,000, cities and towns for census blocks, census tracts, which is the fundamental building stone that we use to build up our congressional district as such, it is less accurate, these are the Census Bureau people telling us, in their analysis of the attempted use of sampling.

So sampling was a failure in 1990, even though the census was not bad. So what does the Clinton administration propose now? They want to totally rely on sampling. Instead of starting off counting everybody, they only want to count 90 percent of the people, so they are going to say 1 in 10 of the people we are not going to count. We are going to have 90 percent of the people.

That is starting off the sampling, and you have nothing to fall back on, because when they come up with this adjustment sample, which is going to be on 750,000 households, larger than 1990, five times as large, they plan to do it in half the amount of time. Unrealistic.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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