

# Washington Monitor

## Kennedy Announcement Could Delay NCLB Reauthorization Until 2009

In early November, Senators Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and Michael Enzi (R-WY), Chairman and Ranking Member, respectively, of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, announced that they are pushing back the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) to 2008. This move, which was forced by the budget battle between Congress and the White House, may mean that no new NCLB legislation is passed until after the next president is inaugurated in January 2009.

Kennedy, who had originally planned to release a reauthorization proposal in August, said he now hopes to finish a bill by early 2008. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), Kennedy's House counterpart, released a draft bill in September, but has yet to bring legislation to the floor for consideration. Even if the House is able to act by the end of the year and Kennedy has a bill ready in January, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to pass final legislation that meets the approval of both Houses of Congress and President Bush against the backdrop of next year's presidential election.

This development is a good-news, bad-news situation for geography. On the one hand, it means the current law, which lacks funding for specific geography programs, will continue in force and effect for the time being. The delay, however, will give the geography community more time to make the case that the law's shortchanging of our discipline must be corrected before any new legislation is signed into law. The AAG is continuing efforts to ensure that geography is appropriately represented in any new NCLB bill, and we urge members to continue their outreach to Congress.

## Census 2010 Facing Critical Budget Shortfalls

With our nation less than three years away from the 2010 decennial census, critical budget issues threaten the ability of the Census Bureau to adequately prepare for the first national count that will reflect our population's new 300 million level. These budget shortfalls, caused in large part by the continuing funding resolution currently in place, were the subject of an October 16 hearing of the House Subcommittee on Information Policy, Census, and National Archives, chaired by Rep. William Lacy Clay (D-MO).

Bureau Director Louis Kincannon spoke candidly about budgetary concerns and the impact it has on the 2010 Census. By law, the decennial census must occur on April 1, 2010 and the results must be submitted to the President in December 2010. "These dates cannot be altered when preparations are delayed," Kincannon testified. "When the appropriation requested in the President's budget is delayed, we lose that time and we cannot always make it up," he asserted.

Kincannon told the Committee about some of the Bureau's options for dealing with the funding shortfall:

- *Cancel the testing of new handheld computers in the 2008 Dress Rehearsal.* These promising but new devices must be tested in the Dress Rehearsal if they are to be used in the 2010 Census. Without them, the Bureau must resort to a paper-based census, which would increase the overall cost of the census by \$1.5 billion. Four hundred contract employees involved in developing the handheld computers have already been laid off as a result of the CR, calling into question the future of this major census initiative.
- *Curtail or cancel parts of the Census dress rehearsal.* Hiring and training for the Dress Rehearsal must be completed in

the coming weeks to ensure that operations can launch as planned in March 2008. If the agency cannot hire and adequately train enough temporary census workers, it may need to curtail or even cancel the dress rehearsal. One test at risk is the rehearsal scheduled for the military barracks at the Fort Bragg Military Base in North Carolina. This would provide the only opportunity to evaluate plans for an accurate count of military personnel and other so-called "group quarters," such as college dorms.

- *Delay crucial address list updating by counties, cities, and towns.* Delayed implementation of the Local Update of Census Addresses program will impede the ability of states, cities, counties, and towns to fully verify the Bureau's street-by-street address lists and ensure that no housing units are missed.
- *Postpone plans for the 2007 Economic Census.* This count, scheduled to start in December, provides a detailed picture of the Nation's economy every five years, guiding economic policy and decision-making at every level. Delay in final preparations could harm the completeness, accuracy, and timeliness of this critical fiscal information source.

In an unrelated note worth watching, the 2008 presidential election will have a major impact on the 2010 census count. If a Democrat is elected, he or she is likely to favor sampling as part of the census methodology, whereas a Republican president would likely try to nix any such effort. Sampling, which is based on several statistical methods, is said to best reflect the population of tough-to-count areas, such as inner-cities. ■

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*Many thanks to our friends at COSSA for providing detail for this article.*

**For background, resources, and more on NCLB see [www.aag.org/nclb](http://www.aag.org/nclb).**