

# Washington Monitor

## Michigan Sociologist to Lead Census Bureau

On April 2, President Obama announced that he has chosen University of Michigan Sociologist Robert Groves to serve as the next Director of the U.S. Census Bureau. Groves directs the University's Survey Research Center and previously served as the Bureau's Associate Director of Statistical Design. The nomination will require Senate confirmation.

The choice of Groves has sparked political controversy in Washington. When Groves worked at the Bureau (in the early 1990s) he supported statistical adjustment to compensate for undercounts. This has caused multiple Republicans to speak out against sampling methodologies and Groves' nomination—various quotes from leading GOP officials have used the terms "political manipulation," "partisan gain," "incredibly troubling," and "statistical sleight of hand."

Despite these concerns, leading Democrats have indicated that it is too late in the 2010 Census process to introduce sampling methodologies—and Commerce Secretary Gary Locke explicitly stated, "It is my understanding that there are no plans in the Department of Commerce or the Census Bureau to use any type of statistical sampling with respect to population count," during his confirmation hearing in March. Locke also told Senators, "The Supreme Court has made it very clear that statistical sampling is not permissible for apportionment purposes. That is the law. We will enforce the law."

Groves, however, could initiate efforts to use statistical adjustment methodolo-

gies in future Census programs and data collections. For these reasons and others, the nomination has been widely praised by social and behavioral science groups. The Consortium of Social Science Associations (of which the AAG is a member) released a statement in support of a "fair and accurate census" indicating that Groves is a "distinguished" and "highly respected leader...in academia and in public service." The statement also emphatically noted "The issue of a statistical adjustment raised by some is spurious!" and urged Groves' confirmation "as soon as possible."

Dick Morrill, a former AAG President (1981-82) and past Chair of Geography at the University of Washington, also praised Obama's choice, noting, "I am both surprised and greatly pleased by Groves' nomination. While his views on sampling improvements for the census may be unpopular with some, his competence in the social science community is unquestioned."

While a date has yet to be announced for Groves' confirmation hearing, he is likely to be approved without undue delay given the large Democratic majority in the Senate. Groves originally joined the Michigan faculty in 1975. He holds a bachelor's from Dartmouth. Both of his master's degrees (statistics and sociology) and his PhD in sociology were earned at the University of Michigan.

## DOL Stimulus Funds to Spotlight Geospatial Technologies

As Doug Richardson reported in his March 2009 column, the Department of Labor (DOL) has been awarded \$750 million in stimulus funding for a program of

competitive grants for worker training and placement in high-growth and emerging industries. This is of special interest to geographers because DOL recently named geo-technologies as one of the three most important emerging and evolving high-growth industries, along with nanotech and biotech.

The Department recently issued further guidance on this program, specifying that "\$500 million of the total amount is targeted for research, labor exchange, and job training programs that prepare workers for careers in energy efficiency and renewable energy as defined in the Green Jobs Act. The remaining \$250 million will be for projects in other high growth and emerging industry sectors."

The guidance went on to note that the DOL is collaborating with other Federal agencies to develop "a multi-pronged investment approach with these funds." The Department plans to issue solicitations for grant awards no later than June 30. This document will be posted on [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) when it is released.

I recently spoke with DOL staffers about this program and they assured me that their commitment to geospatial technologies as a key high-growth industry remains strong and that this commitment will be reflected in the grant award process for these stimulus funds. Interested AAG members may wish to investigate this program when the solicitation is issued. ■

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