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**Testimony**

by

**Arturo Vargas, Executive Director  
National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed  
Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund**

before

**the United States Senate Homeland Security and  
Government Affairs Committee  
Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management,  
Government Information, Federal Services, and  
International Security  
on Lessons Learned from Census 2010 and Planning for the  
2020 Census**

**Washington, DC  
April 6, 2011**

† Deceased

Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the Subcommittee:

I am Arturo Vargas, Executive Director of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund. Thank you for the invitation to appear before you today on behalf of the NALEO Educational Fund to discuss lessons learned from the 2010 Census and planning for Census 2020.

The NALEO Educational Fund is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that facilitates full Latino participation in the American political process, from citizenship to public service. Our constituency includes the more than 6,000 Latino elected and appointed officials nationwide. Our Board members and constituency include Republicans, Democrats and Independents. We are one of the nation's leading organizations in the area of Census policy development and public education, and we are deeply committed to ensuring that the Census Bureau provides our nation with the most accurate count of its population.

With respect to our Census policy development work, since 2000, the NALEO Educational Fund has served on the Secretary of Commerce's 2010 Census Advisory Committee, or its predecessor, the Decennial Census Advisory Committee, and we actively participated in the Committee's discussions surrounding the planning for the 2010 enumeration. We also served on the Joint Advisory Advertising Review Panel (JAARP), which the Census Bureau created to review its advertising and communications efforts. In addition, through our strong relationship with our Latino leadership constituency, we have also become very familiar with the types of challenges that public officials face as a result of the undercount of the Latino population. We also serve as a Co-Chair of the Census Task Force established by the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, which brings together leading civic and civil rights organizations to address pressing Census issues.

In addition, the NALEO Educational Fund was actively involved in outreach to the Latino community for the decennial enumerations in 1990, 2000 and 2010. In 2007, we launched the "ya es hora" (It's Time) campaign, a comprehensive, multi-year effort to integrate Latinos into American civic life. When we launched the campaign, our Spanish-language media partners included Univision Communications Inc., Entravision Communications Corporation, and

ImpreMedia, and our national partners were the National Council of La Raza, the Service Employees International Union on citizenship promotion and Mi Familia Vota Educational Fund on voter engagement. The *ya es hora* network also includes the collaborative efforts of more than 400 local partners, including community and civic organizations, private businesses, and government agencies. The first two phases of this effort involved mobilizing eligible Latino legal permanent residents to apply for U.S. citizenship, and then mobilizing Latino U.S. citizens to vote.

In October 2009, we launched the third phase of the *ya es hora* campaign, *¡HAGASE CONTAR!* (Make Yourself Count!), which focused on promoting the importance of the Census, educating individuals about filling out their Census forms and encouraging households to mail back their responses once they completed their forms. The national organizations and Spanish-language media leaders for this effort were the same as those for the previous two phases of the *ya es hora* campaign. There were also nearly 400 official national and local partners for *¡HAGASE CONTAR!*. The campaign's programs rested on four coordinated strategies – community-based assistance; leadership training and engagement; information dissemination, and mass-media outreach.

At the community level, the campaign and its partners coordinated 33 Census “forums” nationwide in March and April 2010, which saw close to 5,000 attendees. The events – often held in conjunction with other community fairs – provided an opportunity to directly mobilize residents to participate in the Census, in addition to answering questions regarding the Census process and form. More than 300 partner organizations also served as information centers for the campaign, where information regarding the Census was distributed directly to the community. The NALEO Educational Fund distributed 30,000 motivational posters and 90,000 bilingual factsheets to these centers, in addition to thousands of *ya es hora* campaign and Census 2010 promotional materials, such as t-shirts, stickers and informational literature.

To extend the reach of the campaign's message of participation, the campaign trained over 780 local elected, business, labor, and civic leaders in-person through “train-the-trainer” events

across the country; and an additional 260 participated in 16 national training webinars. The trainings discussed the implications of the Census count in local terms, how the Census process worked, and provided tools and resources to organize local awareness campaigns. In addition, we distributed thousands of CD-ROM based *ya es hora ¡HAGASE CONTAR!* Toolkits across the country, which included information, templates, and organizing tools for national and local leaders.

Ensuring that the Latino community had access to timely and relevant information on the Census was a critical component of the *¡HAGASE CONTAR!* campaign. Following the success of our 888-VE-Y-VOTA (Go and Vote) bilingual voter information hotline, we launched the 877-EL-CENSO (The Census) hotline on January 1, 2010. All operators were fully bilingual, and trained on all aspects of the Census process. From its launch until July 1, 2010, the hotline fielded 13,950 calls, and nearly 2,000 on March 22 alone (the vast majority of households received Census questionnaires in the mail between March 15 and March 22). Operators fielded calls from 48 states, in addition to the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. To complement the hotline, we also launched the fully bilingual [www.yaeshora.info](http://www.yaeshora.info) website in October 2010, which included information on all aspects of the Census, including privacy concerns and step-by-step guides on completing the Census form. In addition, the website featured multi-media pages, electronic “post-cards,” RSS feeds, custom maps and data, and tools for local leaders and partner organizations. The website also linked visitors to the campaign’s Spanish and English Facebook pages and Twitter feed, which have over 500 followers each. Nearly 30,000 people visited the site from its launch until July, 2010.

Driving the *¡HAGASE CONTAR!* campaign was a coordinated mass-media outreach effort by the nation’s leading Spanish-language media companies. A series of motivational public service announcements (PSAs) developed specifically for the campaign featured messages on the importance of the 2010 Census, its impact on our day-to-day lives, confidentiality protections, and the simplicity of the Census form. The PSAs also promoted the 877-EL-CENSO hotline, for viewers to call with questions regarding the Census. Over the course of the campaign, the PSAs aired more than 26,000 times nationwide. In addition, Univision Television Group produced a 22-minute program in which Emmy Award-winning news anchor and journalist Maria Elena

Salinas discussed the implications of the Census, and walked-through the Census form for viewers. The special aired twice on all Univision affiliates nationwide, and additional times on Telefutura, Univision's other television network.

In March 2010, the NALEO Educational Fund also conducted a direct "get-out-the-count" campaign in Los Angeles County, in which more than 119,000 households were called by bilingual canvassers from the NALEO Educational Fund's phone bank in Los Angeles. The program targeted households in Census tracts with large Latino populations, and a high "hard-to-count" (HTC) score, as determined by the Census Bureau.

Mr. Chairman, it is critical that the nation's decennial Census produces the most accurate count of our nation's population as possible. Census data are the fundamental building blocks of our representative democracy; Census data are the basis for reapportionment and redistricting. The results of the 2010 Census revealed the importance of the decennial enumeration for charting the dramatic growth of our nation's Latino community and the implications of that growth for our democracy's future. The Latino population in the United States was 50.5 million in 2010, and Latinos are the nation's second largest and fastest growing population group. Between 2000 and 2010, the Latino share of the population increased from 12.5% (one of eight) to 16.3% (one of six). As shown in Table 1, Latino population growth fueled the growth of most of our nation's states, including those which gained Congressional seats during reapportionment.

*(Table 1 appears on the next page)*

**Table 1**  
**2010 Congressional Apportionment and Latino Growth for Selected States**

State	Congressional Seat Gain/Loss	Total Population			% Change Latino Population 2000-2010	% Change Non-Latino Population 2000-2010		Latino Share of Total Population Change 2000-2010
		2000	2010	% Change				
TX	+4	20,851,820	25,145,561	20.6%	41.8%	10.6%		65.0%
FL	+2	15,982,378	18,801,310	17.6%	57.4%	9.6%		54.7%
AZ	+1	5,130,632	6,392,017	24.6%	46.3%	17.3%		47.5%
NV	+1	1,998,257	2,700,551	35.1%	81.9%	23.7%		45.9%
GA	+1	8,186,453	9,687,653	18.3%	96.1%	14.0%		27.9%
WA	+1	5,894,121	6,724,540	14.1%	71.2%	9.5%		37.8%
UT	+1	2,233,169	2,763,885	23.8%	77.8%	18.4%		29.5%
SC	+1	4,012,012	4,625,364	15.3%	147.9%	12.1%		22.9%
CA	0	33,871,648	37,253,956	10.0%	27.8%	1.5%		90.1%
CO	0	4,301,261	5,029,196	16.9%	41.2%	11.9%		41.6%
NM	0	1,819,046	2,059,179	13.2%	24.6%	4.9%		78.3%
IL	-1	12,419,293	12,830,632	3.3%	32.5%	-0.8%		120.9%*
NJ	-1	8,414,350	8,791,894	4.5%	39.2%	-0.8%		116.0%*
NY	-2	18,976,457	19,378,102	2.1%	19.2%	-0.9%		136.8%*

\*In these states, the Latino population growth during the decade exceeded the total population growth, and there was net decline in the non-Latino population. Essentially, Latino population growth helped ensure that the total population increased during the decade.

The Census 2010 data revealing the growth and distribution of the Latino population will now serve as the foundation for the important decisions states are making during the redistricting process. The data highlight the critical need for line drawers to ensure that the maps they produce provide Latinos with fair opportunities to choose their elected leadership and obtain full representation during the electoral process.

In addition, policymakers at all levels of government also rely on Census data to make important decisions that affect the lives of all Americans. These data help make such determinations as the number of teachers that are needed in classrooms, the best places to build roads and highways, and the best way to provide health and public safety services to our neighborhoods and communities. Census data are also used to monitor compliance with civil rights laws and to document incidents of illegal discrimination based on race or gender.

Finally, the accuracy of Census data is critical for the effective allocation of government funding for schools, hospitals and other vital social programs. According to a March 2010 report by Andrew Reamer of the Brookings Institute which analyzed FY 2008 federal government spending, 215 federal domestic assistance programs used census-related data to guide the distribution of \$446.7 billion, 31% of all federal assistance. Census-guided grants accounted for \$419.8 billion, 75% of all federal grant funding.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the ten largest federal census-guided assistance programs include several which help ensure that Latino families and their children receive quality health care, education and housing, including Medicaid, Section 8 housing programs, school education grants, Head Start and nutrition programs.

Census 2010 data revealed that nearly one-fourth (23%) of the nation's residents under 18 are Latino. Latinos are significantly younger than the nation's non-Latinos with 34% of Hispanics under 18, compared to 22% for non-Hispanics. The progress made by Latino families and their children will determine the future prosperity of the nation. An accurate count of the Latino community is necessary if we are to make sound policies for the economic, social and political well-being of the entire country.

In this testimony, we will provide our perspectives on the overall efficacy of the 2010 Census, and the challenges we face in achieving a full count of the Latino population. We will then discuss what we learned about several key components of Census 2010 implementation, and we will provide policy recommendations for Census 2020 planning.

### I. The Efficacy of the 2010 Census

Overall, there are several indicators which point to the efficacy of the 2010 Census. First, in February 2011, the Census Bureau released a comparison of the actual 2010 count for the nation's population with a preliminary estimate the Bureau derived by taking the nation's 2000 Census population, and estimating the impact of native and net migration, and births and deaths. The comparison revealed that the actual 2010 count exceeded the estimate by a mere 0.1%.

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Reamer, "Counting For Dollars: The Role of the Decennial Census in the Distribution of Federal Funds," The Brookings Institution, Washington, DC, March 2010.

In addition, the total final mail participation rate for Census 2010 reached 74%, thereby exceeding the 72% rate achieved in Census 2000 for the return of the “short form.” This occurred despite several challenges such as significantly less investment in outreach by state governments and our nation’s unprecedented economic and foreclosure crises. In fact, the mail participation rates were so high, the Census Bureau was able spend considerably less than initially anticipated for labor-intensive follow-up with households that failed to mail back their forms (non-response follow-up or “NRFU” activities). As a result, the Bureau realized \$650 million in cost-savings, which contributed to the \$1.6 billion in operational savings the Bureau was able to return to the federal treasury.

The results of data from polling within the Latino community also suggest unprecedented Latino participation in the 2010 Census. According to a poll of Latino registered voters commissioned by the NALEO Educational Fund of Latinos in California, Colorado, Florida, and Texas, more than 90% indicated that they returned their Census form. According to an April 2010 report by the Pew Hispanic Center, 85% of the Latinos surveyed indicated that they had or definitely would send in their Census form, with foreign-born Latinos indicating an even higher participation rate (91%).<sup>2</sup>

Despite the early indicators of the efficacy of Census 2010, we believe that our nation did not achieve a full count of the Latino population. We encountered significant barriers to achieving full Latino participation, many of which are relevant to the planning we must now undertake for Census 2020. First, as a result of the country’s economic crisis, many Latinos lost homes through foreclosure or were displaced through other housing problems, making it difficult for them to be reached by mailed forms and other enumeration methods. Many felt disengaged from society and participation in its civic life.

In addition from our extensive work in overcoming barriers to full Census participation, we know that fear and distrust of government are among the leading causes of not participating in the Census. As discussed in greater detail below, we believe the hostile environment toward

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<sup>2</sup> Mark Hugo Lopez and Paul Taylor, “Latinos and the 2010 Census: Foreign-Born Are More Positive,” Pew Hispanic Center, Washington, DC April 2010.

Latinos and immigrants in some parts of our country during the enumeration may have contributed to a Latino undercount in those areas.

Moreover, a few misguided but vocal Latino community leaders attempted to persuade Latino immigrants not to participate in the 2010 enumeration as a strategy to achieve comprehensive immigration reform. Together with a broad group of stakeholders that included leading Hispanic evangelical leaders, we strenuously condemned the call for a boycott and conducted vigorous education efforts which emphasized the value of Census participation for Latino newcomers and the confidentiality of the information provided to the Bureau.

Finally, we believe that the Census Bureau still experienced significant challenges in reaching certain Latino “hard-to-count” populations – residents who may be missed by the traditional “mail/out – mail/back” dissemination of the Census questionnaire form because of their housing arrangements or social or economic status. Of particular concern are Latinos who live in Texas’ *colonia* neighborhoods – communities with unpaved roads, minimal public service and utilities infrastructure, and low-quality housing. As discussed in more detail below, miscommunication between Census Bureau regional officials and the community regarding the method of enumeration which was going to be used in the *colonias* contributed to significant community confusion about how to participate in the enumeration, and eroded community trust in Census enumeration efforts. These operational challenges may have impaired the accuracy of the count of Latinos in the *colonias* area.

The Census Bureau will produce a more definitive evaluation of Census 2010 when it provides the results of the Census Coverage Measurement survey, which will tell us more objectively the extent of any undercounts and overcounts by region and state, by race and Hispanic origin, and by age. The release of these findings is scheduled for 2012, and we look forward to gaining a better understanding of whether the Census 2010 design and methods were equally effective for all segments of the population.

Based on our evaluation of the “successes” of the 2010 Census and the challenges we encountered which likely prevented a full count of the Latino population, we offer recommendations on policy and procedural improvements which should be implemented during the planning and operations of Census 2020. Our recommendations encompass the full range of decennial enumeration activities, from the appointment of top Census Bureau leadership through the funding of Census 2010 post-survey evaluation activities.

## II. Appointment of Top Census Bureau Leadership

One of the greatest challenges facing the 2010 enumeration was the uncertainty surrounding the appointment of the Census Bureau’s Director in 2009. With the advent of the Obama Administration transition, Director Steve Murdock resigned effective January 2009. The current Director, Robert Groves, was confirmed by the U.S. Senate in mid-July 2009. Thus, a little over one year away from Census Day 2010, the Bureau underwent a major leadership transition, at a time when it was facing several demanding planning and implementation tasks, including a major reevaluation of its communications and outreach strategies necessitated by the nation’s economic challenges.

We believe the challenge presented by untimely transitions in Census leadership would be addressed by the provisions of the *Census Oversight Efficiency and Management Reform Act of 2010* (S. 3167) which provide for fixed five-year terms for the Census Bureau Director, with the first term starting in January 2012. We believe these provisions will help ensure that the appointments of new Census Directors occur well in advance of each decennial enumeration, and occur independently from Presidential administration transitions.

In this connection, we also urge the appointment of individuals to head the Census Bureau who are scientists, exceptionally skilled in a relevant discipline, such as statistics, the social sciences, or demography, and who possess a thorough understanding of enumeration and survey methodology. In addition, it is critical that the Census Director have exceptional management expertise and experience, particularly with respect to the operational components of the decennial Census, the American Community Survey and other Bureau data activities. The

decennial Census enumeration is the largest peace-time mobilization of federal personnel in the nation, and the Bureau Director must be able to effectively manage the complex tasks involved in the enumeration operations. Finally, the Bureau's Director must have the capacity to work with stakeholders from across the country from diverse population groups to guarantee a successful census.

### III. Census Questionnaire Design and Dissemination

We believe that several improvements in Census questionnaire design and dissemination helped contribute to the efficacy of Census 2010. First, the Bureau conducted extensive testing on the format and wording of the question on race and Hispanic origin, and re-designed the questions in a manner which the research suggested would obtain the most accurate responses. For example, in Census 2000, the format of the question on Hispanic origin resulted in a significant "miscount" of Latinos from national origin groups other than Mexican, Puerto Rican or Cuban. Statistical analyses of the responses to this question indicated that many Latinos identified themselves as "other" Hispanic or Latino, rather than identifying their specific national origin group, thereby resulting in a miscount of Salvadorans and Dominicans in certain parts of the nation. We believe the revised format of the Hispanic origin question on the Census 2010 questionnaire, which provided specific examples of Latino national origin groups, is likely to have improved the quality of data obtained from this question. However, confusion or concern regarding the difference of the race and Hispanic origin questions persists – at least 785 people called our 877-EL-CENSO hotline with questions on this issue. We encourage the Bureau to continue its testing of the format and wording of its questions on race and Hispanic origin to achieve even greater accuracy in responses.

In addition, for the first time, the Census distributed bilingual English/Spanish questionnaires directly to certain households, based on an analysis of the type and distribution of households that would be in greatest need of language assistance to complete their Census forms. Based on the Bureau's own analysis of responses rates, this strategy contributed to higher mail participation rates and decreased net costs for the Bureau, because it reduced the need to conduct NRFU activities with residents who are not yet fully proficient in English. We also know that

interest in Spanish-language forms was relatively high – the second most common reason for calling the 877-EL-CENSO hotline was to obtain a Spanish-language form (3,800 calls, or 27% of all calls), and an additional 317 needed help with their Census form due to lack of English-language proficiency.

The Census Bureau also effectively disseminated regular and updated information on Census questionnaire return rates for various regions of the country. The Bureau essentially provided this information in “real time” by making it available on its website. The timely dissemination of this information was of great value to community groups in their planning and implementation of outreach efforts. In Census 2020, the Bureau should continue to innovate and use its on-line presence to provide information to stakeholders and improve its communication with the public.

Community groups and other Census outreach partners did experience some significant challenges with respect to the Census Bureau’s strategies for dissemination of the questionnaires and other enumeration strategies in the Texas *colonias* area. As documented in a February 2011 report released by the Leadership Conference Education Fund,<sup>3</sup> the Census Bureau determined that for Census 2010, it would continue to use an enumeration strategy in the *colonias* that it had used for several decades previously – a strategy developed for areas where irregular housing and addresses would impair the effectiveness of the traditional mail-out/mail-back strategy. This strategy, which designates certain areas as “Update Enumerate” locations (“U/E”) involves visits by Census enumerators to every home in a community, where the enumerators confirm each unit's address and exact location on census maps and collect responses from residents to the same questions asked on the printed census form. Households in U/E areas do not receive the printed questionnaire through the mail.

However, the Bureau’s plan to continue using the U/E strategy was not adequately conveyed to community partners who were involved in promoting Census participation in the *colonias*.

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<sup>3</sup>The Leadership Conference Education Fund, “The Hard Count: A Community Perspective on 2010 Census Operations in the Gulf Coast and Texas *Colonias*,” Leadership Conference Education Fund, Washington, DC, February 2010. A copy of this publication is attached to this testimony, and we hereby submit the publication for inclusion in the Congressional record of these hearings.

A significant lapse in communication between Census regional personnel and stakeholders working on the ground led such stakeholders to believe that forms would be distributed through the more typical dissemination strategy, with forms being mailed or hand-delivered to residents. The community partners included groups with strong relationships with the Latino and immigrant population of the *colonias*, local government officials, and English and Spanish-language media. These partners conducted their outreach and education efforts based on the premise that the Bureau was using the more typical questionnaire dissemination strategy. It was not until residents failed to receive forms, that community partners became aware that the Bureau would be implementing U/E methods. Residents became extremely confused about and mistrustful of Census enumeration operations, and the promotion and assistance efforts of the community partners. Because of this confusion and mistrust, local leaders lack such confidence in the Census 2010 data and believe the undercount was so significant, that they plan to challenge the count as they did after the 2000 Census.

The NALEO Educational Fund played a key role as U/E operations proceeded in the *colonias*, serving as a liaison between the Dallas Regional Census Office and community leaders. We helped bring concerns of the leaders to regional staff, and made recommendations about changes in media and outreach strategies to address the enumeration difficulties. We assigned several staff members to focus almost exclusively on assisting community advocates with their census campaigns, monitoring the progress of the count in the *colonias*, and ensuring that Census officials addressed community concerns in a timely and thorough manner.

Ultimately, the Census Bureau responded to enumeration challenges in the *colonias*, by enhancing its communications and outreach efforts in the area,, including the greater utilization of paid advertising targeting the *colonias*; the hiring of more enumerator staff and cultural facilitators to assist enumerators to regain the trust of residents; and the enhanced dissemination of detailed information about the enumeration schedule to local community leaders. While the Bureau appears to be confident that its operational enhancements addressed problems with obtaining an accurate count of the *colonia* population, we believe that the Bureau should specifically assess the accuracy of the coverage of the Census in *colonia* areas when it conducts

its post-enumeration Census Coverage Measurement activities, where it evaluates Census 2010 coverage error.

Another significant challenge in the dissemination of Census questionnaires occurred in Maywood, California, a city in the southern area of Los Angeles County. The Bureau disseminated forms to city residents that listed adjacent cities in the address. Residents were very confused and questioned whether they would be accurately counted in their home city. Local Latino elected officials and other civic leaders were extremely concerned, which again eroded confidence in the Census Bureau. We urge the Bureau to implement procedures to prevent the recurrence of this problem in Census 2020.

Additionally, community partners also experienced difficulties in obtaining information about the Bureau's overall plans for the dissemination of bilingual questionnaires to Latino households, which was vital in preparing community outreach and education strategies. Although the Bureau released maps of the Census tracts which would receive bilingual Census forms, the size of the average Census tract relative to the geographic scope of each map— and the lack of geographic identifying features on the maps, such as city boundaries and roads – prevented community partners from determining the precise areas which would receive bilingual forms. The Bureau also released a list of each of these tracts, but in an electronic format that required extensive reformatting, advanced database skills, and access to geographic information systems (GIS) software to use for any practical application. As a result, groups involved in doing outreach did not receive sufficient information to effectively develop and target education efforts about the bilingual form dissemination.

As we look to the future, we also urge the Bureau to carefully examine data on Latino population growth in “emerging communities” – regions of the country which are not the traditional centers of Latino population concentration. Census 2010 data revealed significant growth of the Latino population in the Deep South, the Pacific Northwest, New England and the Midwest. In determining its future strategy for disseminating bilingual questionnaires, the Bureau should examine emerging Latino population areas that did not receive the bilingual form to help assess whether such areas should receive the form in Census 2020.

In addition, we understand that the Bureau is assessing the feasibility of providing an option for residents to respond to the decennial enumeration through the Internet or other electronic means. We believe that providing an electronic means for responding to the Census could potentially increase participation rates for some residents, and is consistent with the growing use of new technology in a variety of governmental operations. As the Bureau proceeds with its assessment, we recommend that it carefully assess its ability to safeguard the privacy of information submitted electronically, and examine how it would need to educate the public in a manner to sustain public trust in the confidentiality of Census information. Moreover, recent research by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economics and Statistics Administration and National Telecommunications and Information Administration documents the continuing disparity in home broadband Internet access and adoption between certain population groups. The research revealed that Latino and African American households had significantly lower rates of broadband adoption than non-Hispanic White and Asian households.<sup>4</sup> Although the research attributed some of this variance to factors such as income and education level, the gap between Latino and non-Hispanic White broadband adoption persisted even after controlling for those factors. Thus, as the Bureau proceeds with its planning for Census 2020, it must carefully consider the continued racial and ethnic disparities in Internet and broadband access, and it should evaluate options available to make electronic filing accessible to individuals who currently lack the technological resources or skills to utilize electronic filing.

#### IV. Census 2010 Communications and Outreach Plan

Through our work on the 2010 Census Advisory Committee and the JAARP, the NALEO Educational Fund gained a thorough understanding of the Census Bureau's 2010 communications and outreach activities, including the development of the messages and themes used to educate the public about the importance of participating in the enumeration, the Bureau's media strategy for reaching Latinos, and the Bureau's enlistment of community partners for its outreach efforts. Generally, we commend the Census Bureau on its efforts to obtain the input of stakeholders who were familiar with the needs of diverse and hard-to-reach communities while it

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<sup>4</sup>U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration and National Telecommunications and Information Administration, "Exploring the Digital Nation: Home Broadband Internet Adoption in the United States," Washington, DC, November 2010.

was developing its communications and outreach plan. We also believe there are areas where the Bureau needs to make significant improvements as it proceeds with its planning for its Census 2020 communications and outreach efforts.

#### A. Message Development for 2010 Advertising

First, we had several initial concerns about the messages and themes developed by the Bureau to reach Latinos and other residents of the nation, because we did not believe they would resonate with members of the public who were experiencing severe economic challenges and dislocation. Moreover, the initial communication campaign failed to adequately emphasize that information provided to the Census is confidential. The Bureau's contractors revised the campaign to address these concerns, but failed to implement one of the most important recommendations of the JAARP members – the development of messages and advertising targeted specifically toward Latinos who are native-English language speakers and listen to radio and watch television and other media in English. The Bureau and its contractors failed to recognize that a communications strategy aimed at Spanish-dominant Latinos would not reach or engage all of the nation's 50.5 million Latino residents. According to 2009 ACS data, 10.2 million Latinos speak only English at home, or 24% of the Latino population age 5 and older. For Census 2020, the Bureau must develop messages and advertising that specifically target English-dominant Latinos, because they have demographic characteristics that are different from those of Spanish-dominant Latinos or non-Latinos.

#### B. Census 2010 Media Buys

Generally, we believe that the Census Bureau's paid Spanish-language media advertising was an effective investment in Census education and outreach. As discussed in more detail below, for Census 2020, we believe the Bureau should enhance the amount of its investment in Spanish-language media and revise its targeting for local media buys. In addition, we recommend that the Bureau evaluate the extent to which its investment in Spanish-language paid media advertising helped improve the mail-back return rates of Latinos, and contributed to the cost-savings realized by the Bureau for its NRFU expenditures.

Our recommendations on Spanish-language media buys are based in part upon a February 2010 analysis we conducted of the Census media plan for hard-to-reach areas. We shared our findings in testimony provided to the Subcommittee on Information Policy, Census, and National Archives of the U.S. House of Representatives Oversight and Government Reform Committee. The recommendations we provided based on that analysis are still relevant to the Bureau's future media plans for Census 2020. First, as was the case with its message development, the Bureau also failed to target English-dominant Latinos through its paid advertising. The Bureau made virtually no investment for media buys to reach this segment of the Latino population, and it must ensure it plans for such investment in its 2020 media plan.

We also found that the \$25.5 million allocated by the Bureau for Spanish-language advertising did not adequately take into account both inflation and the growth of the Spanish-speaking Latino population since 2000. Moreover, it was not large enough to ensure that there would be sufficient market penetration for the Latino population, particularly for Latinos in emerging communities. The Bureau must take all of the foregoing consideration into account when determining how much funding to allocate for English- and Spanish-language advertising during Census 2020.

In addition, the Census Bureau must provide greater transparency with respect to the criteria it uses for targeting local Spanish-language media buys during Census 2020 and improve its communication with stakeholders regarding the criteria. We believe that the Bureau provided overly-vague information to stakeholders about its strategy for targeting local media buys during the course of its development and implementation of its Census 2010 communications plan, and that such information made it difficult for stakeholders to clearly understand the criteria used by the Bureau. The Bureau's stakeholders include many organizations that are very familiar with the needs of the Latino community, and the Bureau's lack of clarity prevented those stakeholders from providing the Bureau with effective guidance on the targeting of local media buys.

Our analysis also revealed that the Census Bureau failed to make local television buys in several markets where it appeared that such advertising would be integral for a successful Census enumeration campaign. These included markets with emerging Latino populations that have

seen rapid growth since the previous decennial census, dramatically low Census form return rates, and high “Hard-To-Count” (HTC) scores - scores which help the Census determine which geographic areas have populations which are the hardest to count. These markets require additional attention beyond the standard elements that are being provided by the other components of the Bureau’s outreach program. As the Bureau proceeds with its 2020 planning, it should evaluate whether the lack of local “spot” media buys had an impact on the effectiveness of its media plans in those markets. In addition, as described further below, it should examine whether revisions in its targeting methodology for local Spanish-media buys would result in improved allocation of local buys in those markets. Should the Bureau determine that revisions in its methodology would still not result in the allocation of local buys in those markets, it must determine how to implement other effective strategies to ensure that these emerging populations will have as much awareness of Census 2020 as those who reside in markets that are receiving national and local media buys.

Finally, our analysis also identified potential weaknesses in the methodology used by the Bureau to determine its allocation of local Spanish-language media buys, and we were extremely concerned that those combined weaknesses would contribute to faulty targeting which would fail to secure optimal Latino participation in the Census 2010 enumeration. As it proceeds with its Census 2020 planning, we urge the Bureau to examine whether its methodology for targeting local Spanish-language media buys impaired the effectiveness of its communications plan. We also recommend that the Bureau remedy the weaknesses we identified by appropriately adjusting the methodologies used in its criteria for allocating local media buys, particularly with respect to the HTC score and its use of Census Mail Return Rates (MRR) thresholds to determine whether markets are allocated local buys. For example, the Bureau did not allocate any local media buys to Atlanta, notwithstanding the relatively large number of Latino households in the area. This occurred in part because the Bureau’s methodology also takes into account whether the share of the Latino population in a market meets a specific threshold, and Atlanta did not meet that threshold. Similarly, the Bureau did not allocate local media buys to Laredo, where a high share of the market is Latino and hard-to-count, in part because its methodology includes a criterion with a high threshold for total Latino population size.

Given the critical need to count Latinos in emerging communities or areas without relatively high Latino populations, we recommend that the Bureau place a higher priority on the HTC score and MRR, and a lower priority on the criteria relating to Latino share of the population and total Latino population size when determining its local media buys. This prioritization should replace the Bureau's current methodology, which simply requires that a market meet four of six specified criteria. In our earlier testimony, we offered some recommendations on simple alterations that could be used to improve those methodologies – such as calculating MRRs and HTC scores specifically for Latino-majority tracts, or determining the percentage of Latinos living in low MRR or high HTC tracts – and we urge the Bureau to consider them seriously when developing its Census 2020 local Spanish-language media buy strategy.

### C. Social Media and New Technology Outreach Platforms

The NALEO Educational Fund commends the Bureau for its efforts to utilize new media platforms and technologies to reach stakeholders and the public at large. The primary Census 2010 website was engaging and accessible for all audiences, and included tools ranging from an easy-to-use question and answer section, to regularly updated maps and data on MRRs at various geographic levels. The site also included dedicated areas for partners, with information simply organized by intended end-user and audience. The Bureau also launched Twitter and Facebook feeds, which are fast becoming two of the most popular vehicles for information dissemination in the United States.

In addition, the Bureau's early release of a Spanish-language website should be highly commended. The site was launched several months before the start of mail-out operations, and included vital information about the Census for the general public. However, the Spanish-language site was not a direct mirror of the English-language version, and as such lacked many of the features and information contained in the English-language site. It also lacked partner resources in Spanish, limiting the accessibility for community leaders conducting Census outreach who are not fully proficient in English. According to the 2009 American Community Survey, 35.5 million Americans over age 5 speak Spanish, of whom almost half (16.2 million) speak English less than very well. To ensure that some of the most difficult to count residents

have access to the same information on the Census as those proficient in English, we recommend that the Census 2020 website be fully bilingual in both Spanish and English.

#### D. The Partnership Program

The NALEO Educational Fund also believes that the Bureau's Partnership Program is an integral component of its Census 2010 outreach efforts, and that a robust Partnership Program is critical for reaching hard-to-count populations and ensuring their participation in the enumeration. Through the Partnership Program, the Bureau engages community-based organizations, religious leaders, educators, local businesses, and media outlets who have strong relationships with hard-to-count populations and are familiar with the barriers they face in Census participation. The Bureau utilizes the assistance of Partnership Program stakeholders in educating residents about the importance of returning their Census questionnaires, and helping them surmount the barriers in completing and returning their forms.

The NALEO Educational Fund and its partners saw numerous cases across the country during the Census 2010 campaign where the vitality of local partnerships with Census Bureau staff played a critical role in the success of local outreach efforts. One such example occurred in the City of Los Angeles, where Census Bureau staff engaged local organizations and leaders early in the Census effort, which allowed for better planning and the strengthening of relationships between community organizations and leaders ahead of the actual Census. In addition to some local funding of non-profit efforts, the Partnership Program ensured that timely and locally relevant information from the Bureau reached community leaders, and that local efforts were able to use limited resources efficiently.

We also recommend that Partnership Specialists, the Census staff that work with local community and business organizations to raise Census awareness, continue their efforts throughout the NRFU operations. Many community-based groups and state partner organizations were confused when there were no Partnership Specialists available in their areas after the mail-out/mail-back phase of the enumeration ended. As result, local partners lacked access to information and paths of communication with the Bureau during the critical NRFU phase, particularly in hard-to-count areas with lower mail response rates.

For Census 2020, the Bureau must enhance its promotion and utilization of the Partnership Program. It should also make the program an on-going component of its outreach efforts on all Census activities, and not just those related to the 2020 enumeration. To achieve this goal, Congress must appropriate sufficient funding for the Bureau so that it has the resources needed to sustain and strengthen the program. We note that the Bureau faced significant challenges in obtaining sufficient funding for the Partnership Program in FY 2009, when resources were needed to start the critical planning stages of the program. Funding and implementing a robust Partnership Program on an on-going basis would prevent the recurrence of this problem.

#### E. Census in Schools

Based on our discussions with Latino school board members and other Latino educators, we also believe that the Census in School program was generally an effective component of Census 2010 outreach as it was in 2000. The Census Bureau disseminated lesson plans, teaching guides, and other informational materials about the decennial enumeration that reached 56 million students nationwide. We offer several recommendations on how the Bureau can improve the Census in Schools program during Census 2020. First, the timing of the dissemination of Census in Schools materials should be more closely aligned with school schedules. We heard from educators who did receive the materials at a time when they could be effectively incorporated into their instructional curriculum. In addition, we also learned that in some school districts, materials were not effectively disseminated by top administrators to teachers and other “frontline” educators. The Bureau should work with administrative personnel at school districts during Census 2020 to ensure that they develop and implement effective plans to distribute materials to the educators who have the most direct contact with students and parents. This may also involve more direct promotion of the materials on the Bureau’s website to “frontline” educators. Finally, we learned that some school districts found the costs for obtaining Census in Schools materials to be prohibitive. The Bureau should explore options available to reduce the costs incurred by school districts in obtaining and utilizing these materials.

In addition, the Bureau targeted K-12 students for the dissemination of Census in Schools materials in the mainland states. In contrast, only K-8 students were targeted in Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories. There is no justification for this discrepancy, and it should be remedied in Census 2020.

#### F. Philanthropic Investment in Census Outreach by Non-Profit Organizations

The participation of non-profit organizations familiar with the needs of hard-to-count communities was integral to the Census Bureau's partnership and outreach activities. This participation would not have been possible without a substantial investment of resources by private philanthropic entities. The investment of private funding was particularly critical in light of the fact that state and local governments faced serious budget constraints that prevented them from providing any significant amount of resources for nonprofit outreach efforts.

In order to implement an effective Census outreach program, non-profit organizations must be able to expand their capacity and carry out intensive education and engagement initiatives in a relatively short amount of time. These organizations need resources to plan and prepare for this kind of effort several months before the actual enumeration. For Census 2020, it is important that the Bureau start to engage and educate philanthropic entities well in advance of the enumeration, so that they budget and distribute funding in a timely manner.

#### V. Building Public Trust in the Confidentiality and Privacy of Census Responses

Because we know that fear of government agencies and how Census data will be used is one of the most significant barriers to full Census participation by the Latino community, we have strongly advocated for policies that build public trust in the confidentiality and privacy of information provided by Census respondents. We believe that there are several important policies that should be implemented or strengthened as part of Census 2020 planning. First, we believe the federal government should establish an inter-agency task force to educate all federal agencies about the importance of promoting participation in the 2020 Census. The task force should also provide guidance to agencies about the types of activities that promote public trust in the confidentiality of Census data and its proper use by the federal government. The task force can assist agencies in developing strategies to ensure that their activities do not undermine public trust or create barriers to full participation in the Census. The task force should also develop "best practices" for state and local governments, so that the public receives a consistent message from all levels of government regarding the confidentiality of its responses to the Census enumeration.

In addition, before the 2010 enumeration, there was significant public confusion about whether provisions of the federal PATRIOT Act superseded other federal law guaranteeing the privacy of

data collected during the decennial enumeration. Ultimately, the Department of Justice issued a letter stating that the PATRIOT Act did not override Census confidentiality protections. However, the letter was released on March 3, 2010, less than a month before Census Day. If the PATRIOT Act is renewed by Congress, the Department of Justice should re-issue a statement regarding the supremacy of Census confidentiality provisions well in advance of Census 2020. In addition, all publications and informational materials released by the Bureau which discuss the Census confidentiality provisions of Title 13 of the U.S. Code should explicitly state that no other provisions of law supersede them, including the PATRIOT Act.

Finally, in comparing the Census Bureau's preliminary 2010 population estimates for states and counties with the actual Census 2010 count, we learned that there was a significant variance in the population figures for the state of Arizona, and Maricopa County in particular. In Arizona, the actual Census count fell 4.1% below the Bureau's estimate, the greatest variation of its kind for all of the states in the nation. Similarly, in Maricopa County, the most populous in Arizona, the Bureau had estimated there would be 235,704 more residents than what the actual Census count shows.

We are deeply concerned that the hostile environment toward Latinos and immigrants in Arizona and Maricopa County during the 2010 enumeration undermined public trust in government agencies and the confidentiality of Census data. This in turn may have contributed to an undercount of residents suggested by the Bureau's population estimates. We urge the Bureau to thoroughly examine the variance between its estimates and the actual Census count for all states and counties in the United States, to determine whether those variances indicate an actual undercount and to offer recommendations to address this problem in Census 2020.

#### VI. On-Going Census Operations and the Diversity of the Census Workforce

During the 2010 enumeration, we also found that there was a need for better communication and coordination between the Bureau's national office, and regional and local operations. We found that in some cases, national policies were not communicated effectively to local offices, or that that national headquarters was not aware of problems in the field. We also learned that there was some times inconsistent interpretation and implementation of practices between various local

offices. One of the most dramatic examples of this occurred when we tried to obtain clarification regarding policies affecting the completion of the “Be Counted” forms, the forms which could be used by residents who did not receive questionnaires in the mail or misplaced them. Despite our relationships with various Census Bureau staff, we encountered considerable challenges confirming whether Be Counted forms could be distributed by non-Bureau staff, and to what degree non-Bureau staff could provide direct assistance with Census forms. To confuse the situation further, we encountered various conflicting interpretations of the regulations on these two topics from permanent and temporary Bureau staff across the country. For the 2020 Census, the Bureau should implement effective policies to enhance coordination and communication about enumeration policies and procedures throughout the agency.

In addition, the NALEO Educational Fund has consistently urged the Census Bureau to employ a workforce that reflects the diversity of the nation’s population, in order to accurately reach and count our nation’s Latino residents in the decennial Census. The Bureau must strengthen its existing efforts to implement a well-designed and effective recruitment, retention and promotion plan to increase the overall number of Latinos in the Bureau’s permanent workforce. As the Bureau opens and staffs its temporary regional offices for Census 2020, it must hire a diverse group of top managers to lead its regional operations. When the Bureau hires enumerators, it must continue to employ staff members who are familiar with their local communities and residents. For some Latino communities, this involves the employment of enumerators who are bilingual in English and Spanish. During its planning for Census 2020, the Bureau must ensure that it has effective strategies in place to hire such staff in regions with rapidly-growing emerging Latino communities.

## VII. The Census Bureau’s Advisory Committees

We believe the Census Bureau’s Advisory Committees, including the 2010 Census Advisory Committee and its predecessors, played an important role in guiding and monitoring critical Census policies and practices for the decennial enumeration and other key Census operations. The Committees brought together stakeholder from diverse population groups, data users, and organizations of elected officials to provide input on a broad range of Census planning and implementation issues.

We have very much appreciated the opportunity to serve on the 2010 Census Advisory Committee. The charter of the Committee has expired, and we are also grateful that Census Bureau Director Robert Groves worked with the Committee before its demise and provided us with an opportunity to articulate recommendations for the future Advisory Committee structure and responsibilities. We urge the Bureau to implement the recommendations, so that a newly-constituted Advisory Committee can provide input in the earliest stages of Census 2020 planning.

### VIII. Funding for Census Operations and Activities

Throughout the last decade, the NALEO Educational Fund, together with other Census stakeholders, engaged in on-going advocacy to ensure that the Census Bureau received the funding it needed to effectively plan and implement the 2010 enumeration. As of this writing, Congress is considering the Continuing Resolution for FY 2011 (CR) which would fund the government operations for the remainder of the fiscal year. The House-passed version of the CR would appropriate \$833.7 million for the Census Bureau's Periodic Censuses and Programs account, a reduction of \$152.9 million, or 15.5%, from the President's FY11 budget request.

The level of funding in the House-passed version of the CR would have a serious detrimental impact on several important Census activities. It would impair the ability of the Census Bureau to obtain reliable data from the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS provides updated data on the demographic and social characteristics of the population that are used by local governments to provide local services, such as emergency preparedness, education, and road maintenance, in a cost-effective manner. Businesses and industry rely on ACS data to plan investments, such as the location of plants and stores, capital projects, workforce availability and training needs, and customer needs and preferences. Thus, reliable ACS data are critical for sound business planning and profitability, and economic prosperity.

Furthermore, other federal programs rely on the ACS for implementation of the programs and priorities of the federal government. For example, the Department of Defense uses ACS data for the implementation of the procurement technical assistance it provides to businesses. The Department of Transportation relies on ACS data for highway planning and construction, and the

Department of Agriculture uses the data for water and waste disposal system planning in rural communities. Under the federal Voting Rights Act, the Department of Justice must use ACS data to determine which jurisdictions must provide language assistance during the electoral process. In addition, the Bureau uses ACS data in several aspects of its decennial enumeration planning activities, and the lack of reliable ACS data could impair the Bureau's ability to carry out its planning in a cost-effective manner.

The reductions included in the House-passed version of the CR would also prevent the Bureau from implementing a cost-savings plan that would enable it to avoid a full and expensive canvass and updating of the nation's addresses in the years before the 2020 Census. Finally, with such a significant reduction coming halfway through the fiscal year, the Bureau would have to eliminate or delay vital evaluation studies of the 2010 Census which are key to reducing costs for the next enumeration. Without timely results from evaluation programs, census planners could make errors in judgment in planning for the 2020 Census that could increase costs substantially. We urge Congress to reject the reductions to the Census appropriations included in the House-passed version of the CR, and to ensure that the Census Bureau has the resources needed to conduct the ACS and Census 2020 planning in a cost effective-manner.

As we look beyond FY 2011, we note that the Government Accountability Office has consistently documented the fact that reasonable investments in census planning in the early part of the decade help save millions, and perhaps billions, of dollars in census costs down the road. Congress has often turned to the Census Bureau's budget as a source of expendable funds after each census, overlooking the important work the agency does year in and year out and starving the critical research and testing phases of the next enumeration. We commend Members of this subcommittee for their support of the Census Bureau and urge your vigilance in protecting the Census Bureau from misguided raids on its budget in the early years of this decade.

In this connection, we also note that policy proposals have emerged that would significantly impair the sound implementation of the ACS. Some policymakers are supporting legislation which would make responding to some or all of the ACS questions voluntary rather than mandatory. Others have supported efforts to completely eliminate funding for the ACS. With

respect to the former proposal, in 2003, the Census Bureau conducted a test to determine the feasibility of implementing a voluntary ACS. The Bureau found that a dramatic decrease occurred in mail response when the survey was voluntary; the mail cooperation rate fell by over 20 percentage points. The voluntary methods also resulted in diminished ACS interview rates, which in turn adversely affected the reliability of the ACS estimates produced. In order to maintain reliability of the ACS' sample using voluntary methods, the Bureau would need to significantly increase the sample size for the survey, and the Bureau estimated that such an increase would require \$59 million more in expenditures than the funding needed for a survey using mandatory methods.

Ultimately, a strong ACS program will result in cost-savings for the federal and local governments, which will have the reliable data needed to effectively target government funding and services. It will ensure that businesses can thrive and the economy will grow. Eliminating or weakening the ACS is short-sighted, and will prove far more expensive in the long run than any immediate savings realized through cuts in ACS funding. We urge Congress to protect and strengthen the ACS throughout the legislative process.

The NALEO Educational Fund remains committed to being an active and thoughtful partner to this Subcommittee, Congress, the White House and the Census Bureau, in ensuring the success of the 2020 Census, so that our nation can rely on the most accurate data possible. I thank the Chairman, the Ranking Member, and the Subcommittee once again for providing us with the opportunity to share our views today on lessons learned from the 2010 Census and planning for Census 2020.