



# Association of Public Data Users NEWSLETTER

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## The Cycle Renews: Fiscal Year 2009 Budget Proposal

President Bush sent his detailed Fiscal Year 2009 budget proposal to Congress on February 4, thus renewing the process for funding federal programs beginning October 1, 2008.

**Census.** The budget seeks \$2.64 billion for the Census Bureau, more than doubling the year's appropriation of \$1.26 billion. Of this, \$2.143 billion is for the 2010 census, including the American Community Survey (ACS) and MAF/TIGER work. With this money, the Census Bureau will open and staff 150 early census offices, conduct a 100% address canvass of all housing units nationwide, finalize electronic systems, print millions of forms, develop a national advertising campaign, and hire additional staff to oversee field operations.

The ACS will continue nationwide. The President's budget does not allocate a specific amount for the ACS share of 2010 census funds; the current year's appropriation is \$182 million.

The Census Bureau's budget is divided into two main accounts. The *Periodic* budget is the larger of the two, and covers the decennial census (including ACS), intercensal population estimates, the Economic Census and Census of Governments, and other similar cyclical programs. The overall budget request for *Periodic* is \$2.366 billion. The second account is *Salaries and Expenses*, which covers ongoing surveys (including SIPP). The budget request for the *S&E* category is \$269 million, a small increase of \$36 million over this year's funding level.

The Economic Census funding request is \$119 million, a small decrease from 2008, to continue editing and review of the data collected this year

### Problems with Handhelds

Problems are emerging with the Census Bureau's plan to conduct a "paperless" 2010 census, using handheld computers, a program labeled Field Data Collection Automation, or FDCA. Last week, meetings between Census Director Steve Murdock, Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez, and congressional leaders and staff discussed the census contract to buy the computers, networking equipment, and programming services from Harris Corp'

The program is already \$50 million over budget. It appears likely that as much as \$500 million more may be needed to fix the problems. The alternative is a traditional paper-based census, estimated to cost at least \$1 billion extra.

APDU will continue to monitor the situation and will report further news as it develops.

(as the 2007 Economic Census) and for product production.

Also included is an \$8.1 million initiative to improve economic statistics by providing quarterly and annual coverage of all 12 service sectors through the Quarterly Services survey. This funding was requested last year, but was eliminated by Congress during the final negotiations over the FY08 appropriations bill.

The Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) is provided for in the budget request with \$45.7 million, which would continue it with a

full sample of 45,000 households beginning next September. It also will allow for improvements to the current SIPP system by 2012, including work on implementing the Event History Calendar. For more information, visit [www.sipp.census.gov/sipp/](http://www.sipp.census.gov/sipp/).

**BEA.** The President has requested \$91 million for the Bureau of Economic Analysis and its parent agency, the Economic and Statistics Administration, for FY09. This represents an increase of \$11 million, which would be used, in part, to develop improved measures of the health care sector (\$3.2 million) and to continue an initiative to measure investment in research and development, and other knowledge-based activities, for inclusion in the GDP by 2013 (\$2.5 million). (See article below for more details.)

**Other agencies.** It is difficult to know the exact impact of the proposed budget on the other twelve statistical agencies. In general, the budget proposal provides at least some increased funding for all but the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics (ORES) at the Social Security Administration, and the Statistics of Income Division (SOI) at the Internal Revenue Service.

The budget document titled "Strengthening Federal Statistics" was distributed to all APDU members via the listserv. Available on the web at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/usbudget/fy09/pdf/spec.pdf> (click "crosscutting programs" on the left and go to the second item in that group), the document is a regular part of the Analytical Perspectives report in the U.S. Budget.

## BLS Outlines Impact of FY08 Budget Cuts

The Bureau of Labor Statistics has issued a statement outlining the impact of its final fiscal year 2008 funding, which is \$30.2 million, or 5.3 percent, lower than the President's request.

Almost every program is affected. The CPI initiative to develop a more representative sample is delayed. Publication of many items in the Current Employment Statistics (CES) is being eliminated. The sample size of the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) program is reduced by 20 percent.

These and other program impacts are described in the statement, which is available at [www.bls.gov/bls/budgetimpact.htm](http://www.bls.gov/bls/budgetimpact.htm). The new (FY09)

budget request is for \$593 million, a nine percent increase; if this funding comes through, the cut-backs could be restored next year.

## BEA Statement on Budget

The 2008 omnibus bill provided \$77.5 million to BEA – about \$4 million less than the President's request. An initiative to improve the measurement of research and development (R&D) in BEA's economic statistics was not funded. As a result, BEA will not move forward with developing the R&D statistics this year. BEA is addressing the remainder of the 2008 funding shortfall in two ways. First, BEA staff are evaluating and determining reductions to some of its statistical programs. These reductions will target areas that do not specifically impact BEA's core mission. Data that are critical to BEA's core mission are defined by three criteria: (1) feed into GDP and other accounts, (2) required by law or, (3) used to implement Federal Programs. In addition, BEA has decreased its discretionary spending for the remainder of the fiscal year.

The omnibus bill calls on BEA to "expand and improve timeliness of regional data to benefit state and local officials and economic development organizations." This effort will include developing gross metropolitan product data and accelerating the availability of county-level income data. The legislation also directs BEA to study three areas: economic effects of offshoring; techniques for improving the measurement of intangible assets in the National Income and Product Accounts; and the effects of data collection methods on the estimates of economic growth, domestic manufacturing output, and productivity.

The FY 2009 budget, released February 4, provides \$86.9 million to BEA. This \$9.8 million increase over FY 2008 includes funding for the annual cost of living adjustment (COLA), \$2.5 million for the R&D initiative that was not funded in 2008, and \$3.2 million for an initiative to more accurately measure health care in BEA's economic statistics.

## New Publications

*USA Counties* is a Census Bureau publication which has recently been updated. It features more than 5,900 data items for the nation, the 50 states and DC, and all of the nation's 3,141 counties and county equivalents. Topics cover the broad spectrum of federal statistics, from (alphabetically)

agriculture to wholesale trade. According to the Census Bureau, “it is the most comprehensive source of data on counties in the United States.”

You can find it on the web at [censtats.census.gov/usa/usa.shtml](http://censtats.census.gov/usa/usa.shtml). It's a searchable document. You select the geographic area you want, and then either “general profile” or a specific data set. Other options are available when the data come up, including saving as a .txt or a .csv file. This is a marvelous improvement on looking up data in the old, hefty, City-County Data Book!



**Cohort-Specific Measure of Lifetime Social Security Taxes and Benefits (Working Paper 110)**, Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics ORES Working Paper Series, Social Security Administration. This paper “develops estimates of lifetime money's worth and redistributive outcomes under the Old Age and Survivors (OASI) program for all past, present, and future birth cohorts affected by the program through the cohort born in 2100.”

The analysis is complex and can't be explained here. As an example of its results, we'll look at the cohort for birth year 1940 (your editor's group) and for birth year 1974 (her daughter's group). The scenario under present law is that the 1940 cohort will benefit at a return rate of about 2.9 percent, while the 1974 cohort's figure is 2.5 percent.

Because the long-term future of the OASI program under current law is projected at a deficit, two alternatives which obviate this problem are developed: benefits adjustment and payroll tax adjustment. These alternatives have almost no impact on the 1940 cohort – which is already collecting social security – but do matter for the 1974 cohort, reducing the return rate to 1.8 percent under the benefit adjustment approach and to 2.3 percent under tax adjustment. Overall, the return rate drops for each succeeding birth cohort under each of the three alternatives.

The report is located at [www.socialsecurity.gov/policy/docs/workingpapers/wp110.pdf](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/policy/docs/workingpapers/wp110.pdf).



**What It's Worth: Field of Training and Economic Status in 2004** is a set of tables recently released by the Census Bureau. This data set was produced from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), and is consonant with reports previously published in the P-70 series.

The general message is that more education pays off, but field of training can have as dramatic an effect as the education level on earnings. For example, a vocational certificate in engineering is worth, salary-wise, almost as much as a bachelor's degree in natural science, while a person with an associate's degree in computers may earn as much as one with a bachelor's degree in education or social science.

The tables are located at [www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/flid-of-trn.html](http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/flid-of-trn.html). The page also lists earlier reports and data sets in the same series.



Mary Mederios Kent, *Immigration and America's Black Population*, Population Bulletin Vol. 62, No. 4, Population Reference Bureau, December 2007. New flows of immigrants from both Africa and the Caribbean are changing the character of the U.S. Black population. They constitute more than one-fourth of the Black population in New York, Boston, and Miami, and are a major component of the growth in the overall U.S. Black population in this decade. They bring “a diversity of skills and experiences, along with rich cultures and traditions. They are immigrants and they are black—two distinctive social groups in the United States—which influences their adaptation in to the social and economic fabric” of the U.S.

The report continues on to provide more details about this unique population. It's available for downloading at [www.prb.org/Publications/PopulationBulletins/2007/blackimmigration.aspx](http://www.prb.org/Publications/PopulationBulletins/2007/blackimmigration.aspx), or you may purchase it from the bookstore at [www.prb.org/](http://www.prb.org/).



**Catalog of Administrative Data Sources for Neighborhood Indicators**, published by the Urban Institute. This monograph describes 42 sources of administrative data which can be used to develop neighborhood indicators in cities. It provides the name of the indicator, examples of how it can be used, and the source.

The publication is available on the web at [www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411605\\_administrative\\_data\\_sources.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411605_administrative_data_sources.pdf). It begins with a brief section on recent developments in neighborhood indicators work, followed by a discussion of some of the challenges involved in using administrative records for these purposes.

## Census County Division and Census Designated Place Programs Finalized

The Census Bureau recently published the final criteria for defining Census County Divisions (CCDs) and equivalent entities for the 2010 census. Italics added, because the equivalent entities are a new part of the program. For the first time, the bureau is recognizing legislative districts, in the form of county commissioner districts in Tennessee, as CCDs. The same opportunity is provided to each of the 22 states which formerly have had CCDs defined.

The criteria were published in the Federal Register on February 8; find them at [a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20081800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2008/pdf/E8-2348.pdf](http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20081800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2008/pdf/E8-2348.pdf).

The criteria for Census Designated Places (CDPs) were published on February 13. CDPs are designed to recognize areas with concentrations of population that are known by name but have no legal boundaries. Bureau staff received only ten comments in response to an earlier Federal Register notice. Consequently, there are few changes in the program, although a number of issues have been clarified. You can access the Notice at [a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20081800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2008/pdf/E8-2667.pdf](http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20081800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2008/pdf/E8-2667.pdf).

We expect criteria for census tract and block groups to be published, also in the Federal Register, by the middle of March.

## ACS Summary File Available

The ACS 2006 Production Summary File was released last month on the ACS web site and for FTP. The file includes detailed tables from the 2006 ACS data releases. Documentation is also part of the release. According to the ACS staff, this summary file release incorporates many of the comments and suggestions they received in response to release of the prototype ACS Summary File in January 2007. This file is labeled “production” to distinguish it from the earlier file with the same dataset.

For information about the file, go to [www.census.gov/acs/www/UseData/sf/acs\\_summary\\_file.htm](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/UseData/sf/acs_summary_file.htm). If this doesn't work, try just going to the main ACS page, [www.census.gov/acs](http://www.census.gov/acs), and the clicking under “ACS Alerts” in the left

column. This is the Alert issued 1/16/08. You may also find it useful to print the Technical Documentation for the file, which contains a lot of basic information about the ACS.

## New Transportation Planning Guidebook for Using the ACS

The National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP), a Division of the Transportation Research Board (TRB), recently completed a report that may be of interest to public data users. NCHRP Report 588, “*A Guidebook: Using American Community Survey Data for Transportation Planning*” evaluates ACS data and products and demonstrates their uses within a wide range of transportation planning applications. Recommended applications and procedures based on both theoretical and practical considerations are also provided. A highlight of the report for the non-transportation planner is the wealth of information on working with and using ACS data while dealing with “margins of error” associated with the data. A complete .pdf version of the report is available online at [onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/nchrp/nchrp\\_rpt\\_588.pdf](http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/nchrp/nchrp_rpt_588.pdf). A hardbound copy is available for purchase from the TRB bookstore at [www.trb.org/bookstore](http://www.trb.org/bookstore).

## Using Census Data for Transportation Planning

The Census Transportation Planning Products Program (CTPP) is a set of census data products developed and paid for by the state Departments of Transportation and the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) for use in transportation and regional planning applications. Historically, the CTPP represented a set of tables drawn from the census long form with a focus on people at their place of residence, workers at their place of work, and on the worker flows between residence and work. No other census-related product provided information on workers going from one place to another. Besides its unique table structure, the CTPP also has a unique geography. For the CTPP 2000, data were tabulated down to the *traffic analysis zone (TAZ)*, which is often smaller than block group.

Like other data users, transportation planners now have to adapt to using the ACS. Plans are underway for a new CTPP, developed under a \$6 million cooperative funding agreement between the state departments of transportation working under



the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO). It contains data, research, and training components. One of its first products will be an ACS 3-year data set, for which AASHTO has sent the proposed tables to the Census Bureau. For more information, go to [trbcensus.com/acs/tables.html](http://trbcensus.com/acs/tables.html).

## Economic Indicators Data Site Shut Down

The Department of Commerce has a web site, [economicindicators.gov](http://economicindicators.gov). It presents economic data from both the Census Bureau and the Bureau of Economic Analysis. If you went to the web site sometime between February 11-20, you would have found, the following banner at the top: “ Due to budgetary constraints, the Economic Indicators service ([http:// www. economicindicators.gov](http://www.economicindicators.gov)) will be discontinued effective March 1, 2008.”

However, just as this newsletter was about to go to press, the banner was replaced with: “ The U.S. Department of Commerce’ s Economics and Statistics Administration (ESA) has decided to continue the [economicindicators.gov](http://economicindicators.gov) website. Featuring the economic releases from ESA’ s Census Bureau and Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), the site was started by this Administration in 2002 to give greater awareness to these economic statistics. ESA initially planned to discontinue the service due to cost concerns but given the feedback ESA received, the decision has been made to continue the site and improve its functionality.”

On February 20, Senator Charles E. Shumer, Chairman of the Joint Economic Committee, urged Commerce Secretary Guterrez not to shut down the site. He noted that the web site is particularly useful because people can sign up to receive free email announcements as soon as new economic data across government agencies become available. Current subscribers to these emails will have to pay to continue to receive the information in the future.

Shumer said, “ On the brink of a possible recession, the Bush Administration’ s decision to shut down the free flow of economic data boggles the mind. Wasteful government spending should be cut, but shutting down an award-winning website that gives American easy-to-use economic information during troubling economic times is penny-wise and pound-foolish.” He noted that once the fixed costs of creating the website have been paid, the operational costs of maintaining it should be small, and asked Secretary Gutierrez to provide informa-

## President s Corner

Another federal budget battle has started. At a first glance, the proposed budgets for the federal statistical agencies generally look good, but they are subject to amendment and programmatic changes by Congress. Adding complexity to this year’ s budget negotiations is the fact that we are also in the middle of presidential elections and that most of the fiscal year falls into the next president’s tenure. The APDU Board of Directors will be watching as the federal budget situation develops and will keep you informed about significant changes.

At our board meeting in early March, we will be starting to work very actively on APDU’ s annual conference. This year’s conference will be held at the Brookings Institution on Wednesday and Thursday, September 24 and 25, 2008. If you have any suggestions for this conference or are interested in helping with it, please contact me at [president@apdu.org](mailto:president@apdu.org).

I m pleased to announce that Patty Becker, John Kort, Ken Hodges, Ed Christopher, and Paul Zeisset have agreed to develop a marketing plan to increase APDU.s membership. If you have any suggestions about ways to increase our membership – including names of potential members, please share them with any of these people.

The APDU Board of Directors has appointed Patty Becker from the Southeast Michigan Census Council and Joan Turek from the Department of Health and Human Services as our representatives to COPAFS. Ms. Becker will serve in this position for one additional year and Dr. Turek will serve for two years. This staggering of terms ensures APDU that we should always have at least one experienced representative at all times. The board also appointed William O.Hare from the Annie E. Casey Foundation as our alternate representative to the Census Advisory Committee.

Lenny Gaines

tion on the maintenance costs, expected cost savings, and the number of users who may be cut off.

It does seem that users made a difference here. This incident is indicative of why it’s important that the user community communicate and hang together.