



MACS

Minnesotans for the American Community Survey

How to tell the ACS Story

ACS Data Users Conference

May 2015

Joan Naymark

Executive Director **MACS**

What if Members of Congress only heard this from constituents?

Is this survey legit? Is it a scam?

I don't like this question

Why do I have to fill this out?



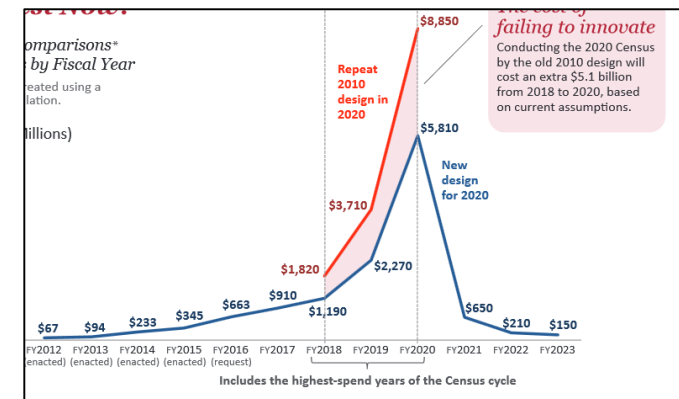
This questionnaire is too snoopy

Will I be fined if I don't send it back?

“Does anyone in
[insert state name]
care about census data?”

Without Congressional Support, What Might Happen?

- Could the American Community Survey become a **voluntary survey**?
- Could the 2020 Census and other key census programs be **underfunded or funded too late** for adequate design and testing?





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Instead, what if.....

Unit of Government	# of google search hits for "ACS"
University of MN	1,080
<u>Minnesota.Gov</u>	137
Minnesota Legislature	131
Housing Finance	146
Health Dept.	85
DEED	68
Commerce	37
Transportation	32
Labor & Industry	32
City of Minneapolis	201
City of St. Paul	76

We informed our elected officials that *[Minnesotans]* depend on data from the American Community Survey, decennial census, economic census, and other great census programs?



MACS was launched March 2013

MN coalition to preserve ACS Census data

MACS Mission.

Educate Minnesota's Members of Congress and the public about the critical importance of census data to drive a strong economy and improve the well-being of all Minnesotans.

www.minnesotansforacs.org

It just takes 5 calls.....



What works?

- Reasonable voices
- Voices of leaders
- Diverse stakeholders -- Not your typical coalition
- Nonpartisan
- Education – *“Here’s how we use it, and this is what would (not) happen without it.”*

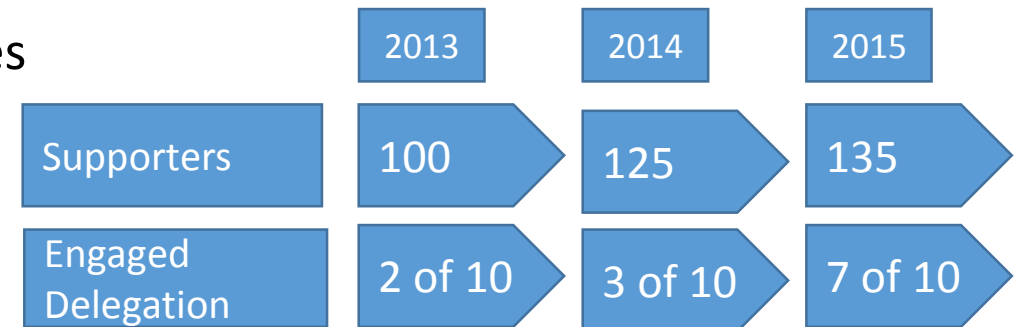
MACS Timeline – *It just takes 5 calls*



- 2012** 5 MN data users - *“What can we do to preserve the ACS?”*
- 2013** **“Let’s go!”** **MACS** begins with 12 supporters, growing to 60 by June & over 100 by December

2014

- Relationships deepened with all 10 congressional offices
- Web site launched ***www.minnesotansforacs.org***



2015

- 135 organizations/individuals
- Members of MN congressional delegation sign supportive letters to appropriations subcommittees
- *MACS* supporters write resolutions, send letters, and join office visits
- Leveraging national and local organizations and partners in other key states



MACS

Minnesotans for the American Community Survey

We use data to
site new stores



We use ACS data to
analyze health
insurance across the
U.S.

We use the ACS
to create IPUMS
files for data
users everywhere

We use ACS data to
understand and
forecast Minnesota
population trends
for state policy and
the legislature

We use ACS data for
economic
development and to
attract jobs





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MACS Voices Tell the Value of the ACS

Census and ACS data provide an important competitive advantage for U.S. markets. Here are just a few examples of how Chambers of Commerce use the data in their everyday work:

- The Greater Houston Partnership uses ACS data on labor force skills and education levels, and on local commuting patterns that could affect future employees, to attract new companies from across the country and globe.
- The Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce uses ACS data to develop its annual Business Vitality Index, to make valid comparisons with other benchmark markets and attract new investment and businesses to the area.
- The Tulsa Chamber of Commerce attracted a \$180 million Macy's distribution center providing 2,500 year-round jobs and 1,000 seasonal jobs by leveraging ACS data about the quality of the local labor force.
- The Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce uses ACS data as an integral part of its Vital Signs report, an annual presentation of indicators to regional leaders.

21 Chambers across US

Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce President Todd Klingel Voices Support for a Strong ACS

November 24, 2014 minnesotansforacs

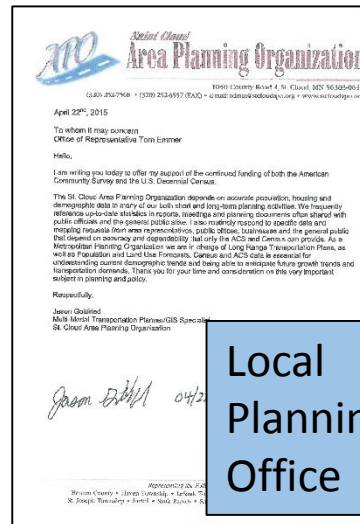
Today, MACS begins its "MACS Voices" video series, which will show how vital a strong ACS is to community and business leaders in Minnesota – and how a less accurate ACS would negatively impact a wide range of business and governmental decision-making.

In our first video, Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce President Todd Klingel notes that "The ACS ... is critical to planning for those of us in the chamber world, but also regional planners not only here in Minnesota but across the country."

Click on the video below to learn more:



Local Chamber of Commerce



Local Planning Office

"Why are ACS census data important?"

"We ♥ the ACS"



Small Business

Minnesota State Demographer Susan Brower Discusses the Importance of a Strong ACS

December 4, 2014 minnesotansforacs

Minnesota State Demographer Susan Brower discusses the importance of the ACS in decision-making in the second of our

State officials

"Minnesota's leaders across state and local government value good data and they use the American Community Survey daily to make smart decisions," Brower notes. View the video below to learn more:



RESOLUTION 15 - 099
In support of full funding for the 2020 decennial census and a mandatory American Community Survey

WHEREAS, Freeborn County, in the State of Minnesota, does hereby find as follows:

WHEREAS, it is necessary and desirable that all Federal, State, and local governments use consistent population and socioeconomic data for program management and resource allocation;

WHEREAS, all levels of government, the private sector, and nonprofit communities rely on data from the decennial census and the American Community Survey to provide services, allocate resources, plan policy, invest wisely, assess the population, monitor change, attract investment, and be accountable to their communities;

WHEREAS, the United States government is responsible for delivering accurate, consistent data on the American population every decade in accordance with the United States Constitution, Article 1, Section 2 for purposes of fair, equal, and accurate representation of the population in the House of Representatives;

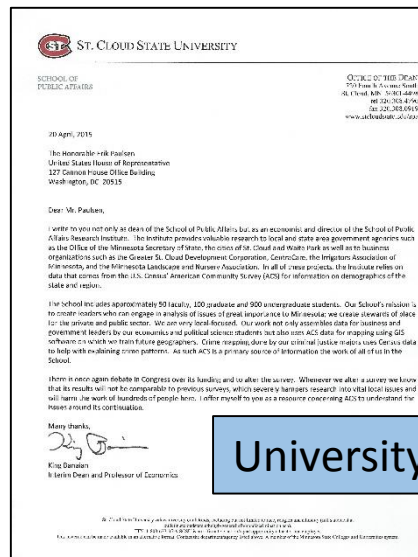
WHEREAS, the Congress of the United States has grown and become more diverse since the 2010 Census;

WHEREAS, the execution of the 2020 Census on a modernized design, taking account of the latest technology, will reduce costs and ensure confidentiality;

WHEREAS, every census since 1790 has been a matter of civic duty and to generate high quality data for governing;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY PROCLAIMED by the County of Freeborn, Minnesota, that the U.S. Congress should allocate sufficient funds in FY2016 and beyond to ensure the 2020 Census is a most accurate and timely

County Resolution



University Dean

Telling the ACS Story



- **Who needs to hear the story**

- Stakeholders
- Leaders in the community in all sectors of civic and economic life
- **Members of Congress**
- The public

- **Data drive tremendous value**

- Census data are comprehensive by topic, geography, and over time.
- Good decisions. Transparency and accountability. Costs and funding. Being in compliance. Attracting jobs and workers. More risk. Thematic maps.....😊
- Local, state, and national policy, programs, funding.

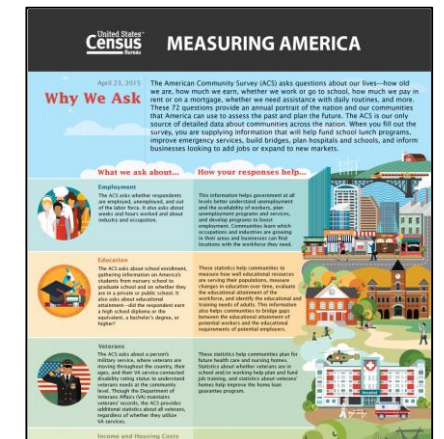
- **What's at stake**

- No other source for these data
- Non-census data are spotty, unreliable, unavailable, or inaccessible
- Rural and small places, and small populations are particularly at risk
- How would \$400+ billion in federal funds be distributed annually without ACS data?

Some of the issues we hear about

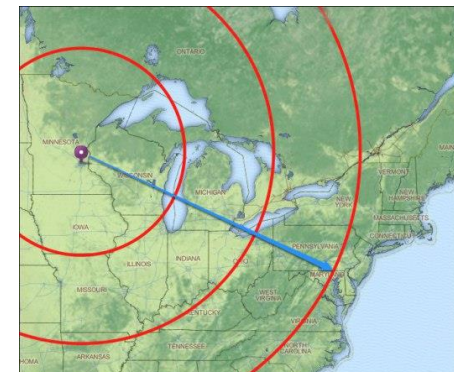


- Issue: Negative respondent calls
 - Response: But response rates are high!
 - Response: Census Bureau Respondent Advocate is a great resource. New tool -- “Why we ask”
 - Response: Favorable local stories!
- Issue: Never a top priority, far away, esoteric, not urgent, does anyone care?
 - Response: Making it real, telling a story, talking about local benefits for the economy and well-being of residents
 - Response: Tailored messages (rural, business/jobs, education, veterans)
 - Response: 2020 is just around the corner
- Issue: Myths abound!
 - Response: Being prepared
 - Response: We don’t have to be experts. There are resources to help.



MACS FAQs

- Could the ACS survey actually become voluntary? What would happen to our data (quality and availability)?
 - *What's Canada's experience, you say?*
- How is the Census Bureau responding to concerns about “intrusive” questions?
- Would Congress **really** withhold funding or authorization in a way that would degrade our data? What happens then?
- Who are your supporters? Is this partisan?
- **Do other states have something like *MACS*?**





MACS Toolkit

Engaging local voices in support of ACS and 2020 Census data

Why are local voices important?

- It works -- Members of Congress listen to constituents.
- It counter-balances the negative blogs, press, and videos.

It's not hard to start something like this

- It's an easy "ask". Leaders, analysts, & investors understand the importance of consistent, reliable data.
- Leveraging existing resources and networks.
- The audience is ready --- a staff member in each congressional office owns "Census".

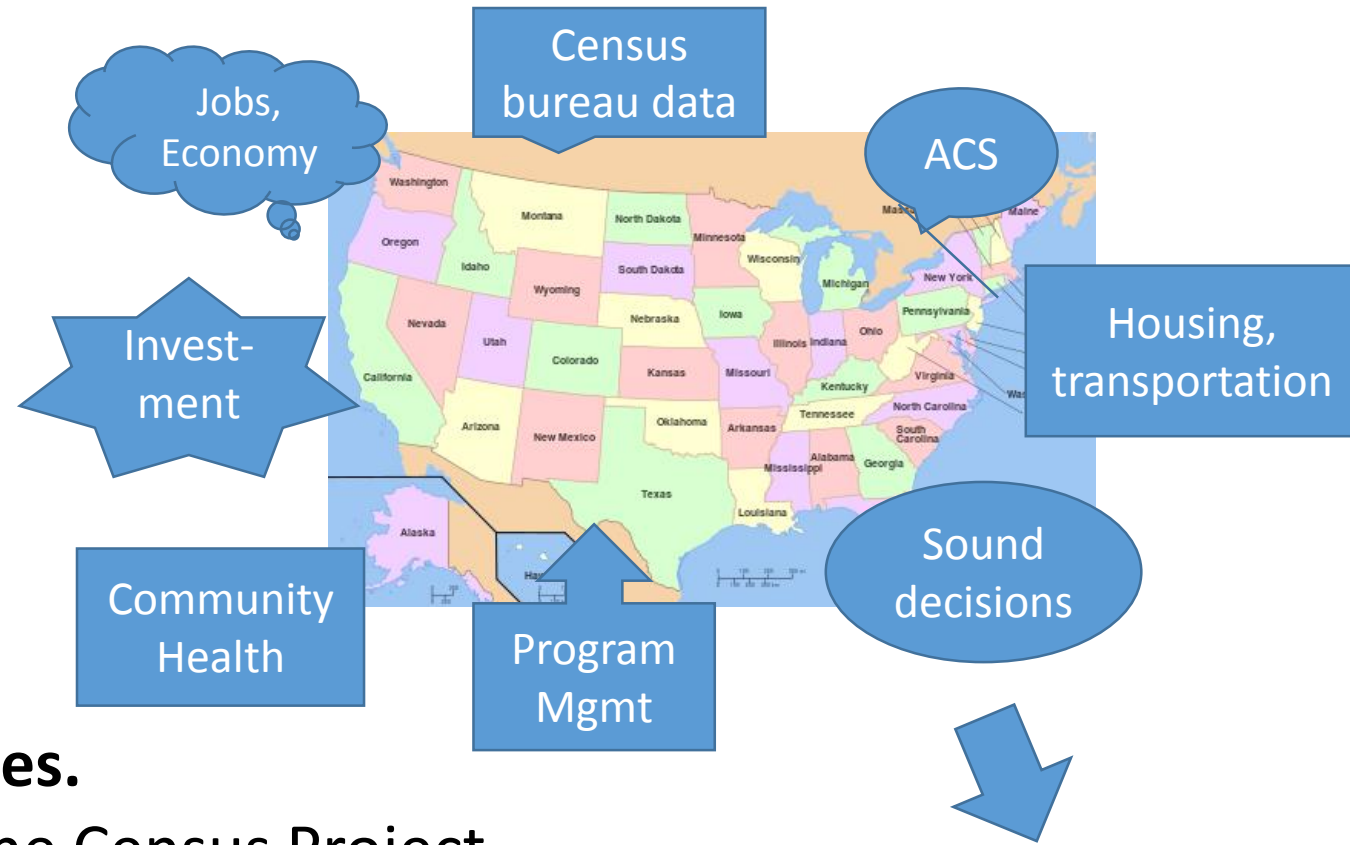
National partners are engaged

- Counties and Cities: NACo, League of Cities, Conference of Mayors...
- Business and industry: ICSC, US Chamber of Commerce, Associated General Contractors of America, Marketing Research Association, National Assn of Home Builders, National Assn of Restaurants, CREC, National Multifamily Housing Council, National Assn of Realtors, Nat'l Assn of Business Economics...
- Professional and data associations: American Statistical Association, PAA, APDU...
- And many more...



10 Steps to Start Something

1. Create a **mission** statement
2. Identify & enlist **supporters**
3. Form a **steering** committee
4. Create data **stories**
5. **Reach out to congressional offices.**
6. **Coordinate** with *MACS*, APDU, The Census Project
7. **Maintain contact with Congress** [*reach out at key moments*]
8. **Communicate** (*copy web site <http://minnesotansforacs.org/>*)
9. **Network** with (local/national) **organizations**
10. Engage the **media**



"a great encore career for boomers!"





Resources, questions, comments.....

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<http://minnesotansforacs.org>

<http://www.thecensusproject.org/>

