The production of high quality, relevant statistical information relies on openness to respondent concerns.
Introduction to the Respondent Advocate

• Created by the Director of the Census Bureau 4 years ago at the urging of Congress
• Serves as the voice of the Census Bureau’s most valued resource – its survey respondents
• Among the 30+ household surveys, ACS is the biggest single customer with 3.5 million addresses in sample each year
• Represents a simple process for resolving respondent issues within a short period of time – Ombudsman position
Respondent Advocate: High-Level Goals

- To improve *our* responsiveness to those we ask to participate in our surveys
- To raise awareness of respondent burden throughout the Census Bureau
- To participate in outreach and education about the Census Bureau's efforts to reduce respondent burden
Key functions of the Respondent Advocate

- Ombudsman for respondents, resolving immediate concerns and issues
- Respect the respondents – including confidentiality of call if necessary
- Meets regularly with ACS managers and staff to stay informed about internal issues and key changes to data collection
- Liaison between respondents and the ACS managers – sharing respondent concerns with those who manage the survey
- Visit Congressional staffs to make them aware of the respondent advocate role and how that can help them with constituent concerns
Respondent Concerns: Common Complaints

- Intrusive nature of the survey,
- Fear that survey is a scam
- Concerns about data safety/hacking
- Constitutionality
- Number and variety of contacts inappropriate
- Amount of time to complete the survey
- Behavior of the field representative
- Want to be removed from survey because of illness or age

Number of ACS Cases By Regional Office (524)

- Los Angeles: 85 cases
- Denver: 48 cases
- Chicago: 92 cases
- Atlanta: 76 cases
- Philadelphia: 76 cases
- New York: 50 cases

* There were an additional 97 ACS cases for which the regional office was undetermined.
Working with Congressional Staffs

- Congressional staffs can reach the advocate with questions or issues at 888-609-0563 or respondent-advocate@census.gov

- Educates Congressional staffs about the role of the respondent advocate, and how constituent feedback gets shared with our survey directors

- Works directly with their constituents – listens to the issues, investigates complaints, finds solutions

- Promotes the value of American Community Survey statistics.

- Educate them on how the Census Bureau is reducing respondent burden to make our surveys as unobtrusive as possible
5 Things the ACS Data Users Group Should Know About the Respondent Advocate

QUESTIONS?

Office of the Respondent Advocate
www.census.gov/respondentadvocate
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