

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, the leaders of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the Congressional Black Caucus, and the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus were joined by Democratic House Leadership in condemning the amendment to the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010 (HR 2847) recently introduced by Senators David Vitter (R-LA) and Bob Bennett (R-UT). The Vitter-Bennett amendment would require the addition of a new question to the 2010 Census inquiring about citizenship or immigration status.

“Since the first census count in 1790, we have included citizens and non-citizens alike, and presidents from both parties have repeatedly upheld the importance of counting each and every person residing in the United States,” said Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez (NY-12). “It is ironic that my Republican colleagues repeatedly questioned whether Justice Sotomayor would adhere to the Constitution, but are now advocating for the Vitter-Bennett amendment, which raises serious constitutional questions.”

“The Census is too important to be used as a political football,” said Congressman Charlie Gonzalez (TX 20), First Vice Chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. “Implementing the Vitter amendment would cost up to \$1 billion and undermine the results of the entire Census. It could even prevent the Department of Commerce from meeting its statutory deadlines for completing the process. Members of Congress reviewed the questions eighteen months ago, and the timing of this amendment makes clear the political motivations behind it.”

“As a CJS appropriator, I have worked hard to ensure full funding of the 2010 Census—every dollar is critical to ensuring an accurate count, and I have fought to that end,” said Congressman Michael Honda (CA-15), Chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus. “A change in the Census form content at this stage would cost the Census and taxpayers an inordinate sum. The Vitter amendment is irresponsible and counterproductive, and I am adamantly opposed to what it tries to achieve.”

“This issue is not about immigration reform, it is about ensuring that the census has an accurate count,” said Congresswoman Barbara Lee (CA-09), Chairwoman of the Congressional Black

Caucus. “Scare tactics will only serve to skew the Census data, driving people to not participate. The census is mandated in our Constitution – everyone must be counted. Census data is used by policy makers at every level of government to make critical decisions about a host of public services including Congressional seats, distribution of federal funds and community services including hospitals and grocery stores. We cannot allow lawmakers to use divisive tactics to scare people into not participating in the 2010 Census. It is too important and there is too much at stake.”

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer decried the costs of the Vitter amendment and the inaccuracies it would cause in Census data, promising that the Democratic leadership would continue to seek a fair and accurate Census.

Congressman Lacy Clay (MO-01), Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Information Policy, Census and National Archives, held aloft a picture of a warehouse filled with already printed Census forms which would have to be destroyed and replaced if the Vitter amendment were adopted.

Also speaking at the event were Congresswoman Judy Chu (CA-32), Chair of the CAPAC Economic Development Task Force, Congressman Xavier Becerra (CA-31), Vice Chair of the House Democratic Caucus, and Congressman Joe Baca (CA-43).

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*The Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) is a bicameral and bipartisan caucus of Members of Congress of Asian and Pacific Islander descent and Members who have a strong dedication to promoting the well-being of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. Founded in 1994 by then Congressman Norman Mineta, and currently chaired by Congressman Michael Honda, CAPAC has been addressing the needs of the AAPI community in all areas of American life. For more information on CAPAC, please call (202) 225-2631 or visit <http://www.honda.house.gov/capac> .*