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*Representing a Network of 1,800
SDC/BIDC Data Centers and Affiliates Nationwide*

We Bring Value-Added Census Data and Education to the User

October 27, 2006

Dr. Louis Kincannon
Director
U.S. Bureau of the Census
Washington, DC 20233

Dear Director Kincannon,

On behalf of the State Data Center Steering Committee, I would like to thank you for providing the resources and staff needed for our recent annual meeting. We had an excellent panel discussion on the American Community Survey as well as many updates on other Census programs. We look forward to continuing the fruitful partnership between the Census Bureau and the SDC Network as the 2010 Census approaches.

I would like to bring to your attention the fact that many Data Centers are already actively involved in planning for the LUCA program. As a result, the Steering Committee has previously advocated for a high level of involvement in this important partnership program and recently received Field Division's October 5 memo outlining ways in which Data Centers can be involved. While the options identified address a number of areas where SDCs are willing and able to assist the Bureau, there are key restrictions on our ability to maximize program participation and training.

Our experience from the Census Bureau's 2000 LUCA training indicated two areas where improvement is needed. First is the communication with local governments. While the committee recognizes the Bureau's legal obligation to communicate directly to the Highest Elected Official, it is critical that all communications be copied to the clerk and/or assessor's office. The Field memo allows for SDC follow-up with local governments to improve communication but we strongly suggest that the Regional Offices work with their SDCs to acquire lists of local clerks and assessors and that these additional lists be included in the Bureau's National Processing Center mailings. These communications must go beyond the Highest Elected Official to be effective.

Second is the number and quality of training sessions. The Bureau's plan to sponsor two training sessions is an improvement over 2000 and many Data Centers would like to be active partners with the Bureau in conducting the training. The Field memo is very clear, however, that training will be conducted only by Census geographic staff thereby barring Data Centers from conducting training.

Based on our experience, LUCA 2000 training suffered by having newly hired and inexperienced staff conducting the training. Many Data Centers are well equipped to help the Bureau extend its limited staff and resources and conduct these training sessions. Also, it is unclear how many training sessions the Regional Offices will be able to support in each state. Again, based on our experience in 2000, the number of training sessions was limited, forcing local governments to travel great distances. This limits overall LUCA participation. We urge the Census Bureau to be flexible in allowing Data Centers to participate in LUCA training, that SDCs be allowed to conduct technical training sessions, and be able

to expand our state coverage by adding additional sessions where necessary. Certainly, there are SDCs that are not in a position to take advantage of such an opportunity, but there are many others who can bring a high level of technical competence and knowledge of local situations to these training sessions. The SDCs can help the Bureau deliver the highest quality training and maximum coverage, if that flexibility is built into the program.

Furthermore, I would like to encourage the Census Bureau to call upon the SDC Network in the development and review of LUCA training materials. An accurate Census count starts with LUCA and the SDC Network is eager, able, and willing to help obtain the best count possible. Please consider involving SDCs more actively in the LUCA technical training.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter and for your continued support of the State Data Center program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Xan Wedel".

Xan Wedel
Chair, National State Data Center
Steering Committee

cc: Jeri Green, CLO
Renee Jefferson-Copeland, CLO
Dave McCormack, Field Division
Tim Olson, Field Division