

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE WM. LACY CLAY
AT THE HEARING ON THE
AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY**

MAY 13, 2003

Thank you Mr. Chairman for calling this hearing. As you may know, I hosted a meeting in St. Louis two years ago so that the Census Bureau could explain this survey to a wide cross-section of business and community leaders in our state. We have over 100 people who attended that session, and all were very interested in the possibilities promised by the American Community Survey. Both Acting Director Baron, and Director Kincannon were instrumental in making the arrangements for that forum.

I would like to thank the witnesses on this panel and the next for taking their time to appear before us today. I hope that this hearing will improve our understanding of this complex survey.

The last hearing we had on this issue was just about two years ago. At that time, the committee was concerned about the cost of the survey; the length of the questionnaire; and the fact that answering the survey was mandatory. Witnesses raised questions about the quality of the information produced by the survey; the complexity of those data for small places; and fears that either dwindling appropriations or cost overruns would result in a survey that was less useful than promised.

Unfortunately, many of those questions remain on the table today. The good news is that we have two more years worth of experience and data with which to answer those questions.

This survey is a bold undertaking. Over the ten-year census cycle, this survey will cost between 1.5 and 2 billion dollars. It is important that Congress recognize the full cost of this survey. Funding it for a year or two won't do anyone much good. If we are to go forward, we must do so recognizing and committing to the full cost of the survey.

I look forward to today's testimony, and I hope that many of these questions will be put to rest today. Thank you Mr. Chairman, and I ask that my full statement be included in the record.