



Population Association of America

June 28, 2012

The Honorable Jeffrey Zients  
Acting Director  
Office of Management and Budget  
725 17th Street  
Washington, DC 20006

Ms. Katherine Wallman  
U.S. Chief Statistician  
Office of Management and Budget  
725 17th Street  
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Acting Director Zients and Ms. Wallman:

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to express our concerns regarding the potential implications of an amendment that Congressman Scott Tipton (R-CO) offered to H.R. 5325, the Fiscal Year 2013 Energy and Water Appropriations Act. As you know, on June 6, 2012, the U.S. House of Representatives adopted the Tipton amendment, by a vote of 355-51, prohibiting the Bureau of Reclamation and other agencies covered under the legislation from funding surveys in which money is included or provided for the benefit of the responder.

While we are not familiar with the details of this particular survey, the members of our organizations, which include statisticians, marketing researchers, demographers, sociologists, economists, psychologists, and mathematicians, rely on—and in many cases conduct—federally supported and conducted surveys to understand people, industries, and trends and to do applied and analytical research on a wide variety of topics. Our members depend on these surveys to be statistically valid and representative of the populations they query. To achieve a representative sample of survey participants, we know many surveys must provide incentives that attract, retain, and compensate individuals for their time and effort. Monetary and/or non-monetary incentives are often imperative for motivating response from certain population subgroups, in order to ensure that the target population is well represented in the survey. Further, we understand that these incentives are provided with the full knowledge and consent of the survey's funding agencies and the Office of Management and Budget.

Although the Tipton amendment is seemingly motivated by one survey supported by one federal agency, we are concerned that its adoption, and possible inclusion in the final version of the Fiscal Year 2013 Energy and Water Appropriations Act, could severely hinder survey and opinion research across all agencies under the legislation's rubric and

establish a dangerous precedent for all other federally conducted and supported research. We are also troubled by language in Congressman Tipton's press release in which he expresses his intent "...to pursue legislative options to ban all federal agencies from including taxpayer dollars in surveys for the benefit of the responder."

We urge the Administration to include language in any message(s) it may release on HR 5325 about the potential implications of the Tipton amendment and to suggest an alternative route for addressing Congressman Tipton's concerns.

We believe the Tipton amendment provides a critical opportunity for our organizations to help inform members of Congress and their staff about the important role incentives play in the design and conduct of federally supported and conducted surveys. We look forward to working with the Administration on this matter. For additional information or assistance, please contact the primary organizers of this letter Ms. Mary Jo Hoeksema, Population Association of America, (202) 341-7283, or Mr. Howard Fienberg, Marketing Research Association, (202) 570-7312.

Sincerely,

American Educational Research Association  
American Psychological Association  
American Sociological Association  
American Statistical Association  
Association of Academic Survey Research Organizations  
Association of Population Centers  
Consortium of Social Science Associations  
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics  
Decision Demographics  
Marketing Research Association (MRA)  
Population Association of America