



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0149-2010, **Version:** *

Res. No. 149

Resolution calling on President Barack Obama and the United States Department of Commerce to remove the classification term “Negro” from the entire United States Census.

By Council Members Dickens, Barron, Brewer, Comrie, Dromm, James, Mark-Viverito, Reyna, Rodriguez, and Koslowitz

Whereas, The Constitution of the United States requires that a nationwide census be taken every ten years in order to efficiently fund government programs, apportion seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, redistrict state legislatures, and correctly plan for community-based services; and

Whereas, The United States Census collects data on the number of individuals living in a particular residence as well as such demographic information as their age, gender, date of birth, race, marital status and property ownership status; and

Whereas, On the 2010 Census, the question pertaining to race lists the term “Negro” as an identifier alongside “Black” and “African Am.”; and

Whereas, “Negro” first appeared on the Census in 1950 at a time when the word was considered more conventional and accepted than it is today; and

Whereas, “Negro” took on a negative connotation during the civil rights movement, when it came to be associated with America’s history of segregation and racism; and

Whereas, The inclusion of the term “Negro” in the 2010 Census has been met with intense criticism from younger generations of color, who feel that the term is offensive and outdated; and

Whereas, The Census Bureau defended the inclusion of the term “Negro” in the 2010 Census by claiming that it wanted to accommodate older persons of African descent who continue to self-identify using

that term; and

Whereas, In light of the uproar surrounding the term's inclusion in the 2010 Census, the Census Bureau has said that it will research the effects of removing the term "Negro" from future surveys as well as from the 2020 Census; and

Whereas, On March 26, 2010, Census Bureau Director Robert Groves personally apologized for any offense caused by the use of the term; and

Whereas, The Census is no stranger to the use of archaic racial labels, having previously used such terms as "Mulatto," "Quadroon" and "Octoroon;" and

Whereas, The term "Negro" is a shameful relic from our country's history and should be left to fade into disuse; and

Whereas, If the Census Bureau is sincere in its efforts to increase participation among underrepresented communities, then it must avoid using terminology that has the potential to alienate whole groups of people; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on President Barack Obama and the United States Department of Commerce to remove the classification term "Negro" from the entire United States Census.

DMB
LS# 370
3/31/10