



FEBRUARY 2011 *Local Government Council*

Census vs. Survey – What to Use When

By Kimberly G. Finnigan, Esq.
Cooper Erving & Savage, LLP

Rocco Ferraro, Executive Director of the Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC), joined the Local Government Council on January 25, 2011, to discuss how to make the best use of data from the census and the American Community Survey (ACS). He began by describing the differences between the decennial census and the ACS, which is a monthly survey of 242,000 households (2.1% of households annually). The ACS has replaced the census as the source for detailed socio-economic information.

The 2010 census will include information down to the block level. Mr. Ferraro also outlined the census release schedule: February to March 2011 – population counts for race and Hispanic or Latino categories down to the block level for redistricting purposes; May 2011 – demographic

profiles for places and minor civil divisions; June to August 2011 – population counts and selected population and housing characteristics for blocks and census tracts; and December 2011 to April 2012 – population and housing characteristics with race and Hispanic origin overlay for census tracts.

The American Community Survey is an important tool for grant applications. The ACS provides data in three different series: communities with populations of 65,000 or more will have annual data available; communities with populations of 20,000 or more will have data available every three years; and communities with populations of 50 or more will have data available every five years. While Mr. Ferraro explained that these surveys are valuable tools, he noted that the information should be used with caution because the margin of error >>

Experts Discuss Cuomo's Agenda

By Kimberly G. Finnigan, Esq.
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On January 27, 2011, a large audience gathered at a Business Review event to hear a panel of experts discuss the potential impact on businesses of Governor Cuomo's administration. The experts included Brian McMahon, Executive Director of the NYSED; Assemblyman George Amedore Jr. (R-Rotterdam); E.J. McMahon, Director of the Empire Center for New York State Policy; and Heather Briccetti,

acting President and CEO of The Business Council of New York State Inc. The panel addressed issues such as the proposed cap on property taxes; the overwhelmingly increasing costs of pensions; the actual effects of consolidation; the need for real and measureable structural reform in government; compulsory arbitration; and the state's economic development strategy. E.J. McMahon expounded on the proposed tax cap, stating that the cap and mandate reform >>

The Local Government Council (LGC) was founded in 1997 to give local government leaders a forum to identify issues of importance to municipalities, to discuss opportunities for regional cooperation and to foster working relationships among local leaders.



Co-Chair
Gerald D. Jennings
Mayor of Albany



Co-Chair
Kathleen M. Jimino
Rensselaer County
Executive

February 22nd 2010 | 11:30am – 1:15pm

Hon. Paul D. Tonko, U.S. Congress – 21st District
Mr. John Cronin, Director & CEO, The Beacon Inst.
For Rivers & Estuaries
Topic: *Participate in the Mighty Waters Task Force – Creating a regional economic development strategy for New York's waterways*
United Way of the Greater Capital Region, Albany

March 22nd 2010 | 11:30am – 1:15pm

Deidre Scozzafava, Deputy Director for Local Government at the NYS Dept. of State Local Government
United Way of the Greater Capital Region, Albany

New Year, New Membership

Membership ensures CEG has the funding to continue to staff the Local Government Council with topics and presenters that engage and educate the members on key issues, in addition to supporting continued regional growth activities in the II-county region.

To join, contact Rosalind Harris, at rosalindh@ceg.org or (518) 465 – 8975 x222



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Census vs. Survey Cont'd

in some categories is greater than 15%, which makes the data unreliable. He also pointed out two major differences between the census and the ACS, which include period vs. point-in-time estimates on income characteristics and employment status and the definition of residence (seasonal vs. year round).

In addition, Mr. Ferraro outlined some current CDRPC initiatives, including recommending the use of 5-year data products; revising community fact sheets based on the 5-year estimates; offering training programs for consumers on accessing, understanding, and communicating ACS data; and collaborating with others to develop a “train the trainer” program for best practices in using the data. □

Local Officials Discuss the States of Their Communities

January was a busy time for local officials delivering news to their constituents on the states of their communities. Regardless of the size of the community, the message was the same: we're cautiously optimistic and we need to move forward. Despite the worst economic times since the Great Depression, many communities were able to reduce the deficit while maintaining the same level of services, and economic and real estate projects are ongoing in a number of communities. Cooperation, reorganization, and transparency were key themes in discussing the future of local government. Each local official noted that important decisions lay ahead and officials need to be prepared to make difficult and possibly unpopular decisions. □

Cuomo's Agenda Cont'd

must go hand-in-hand; without the cap, there will be no chance of mandate reform whatsoever. Ms. Briccetti added that the tax cap will be the strongest incentive for local governments to consolidate, noting that school districts have the most room for consolidation, but doing so is a politically difficult move. With respect to pension costs, the panel agreed that it is a dire situation. From 2000 to 2010, the net assets of pension funds did not grow, but the payouts doubled and employee contributions decreased. Over the next

five years, the local government payout will double, and school districts will pay out four times as much as they are currently paying. The panel was optimistic that Governor Cuomo will make meaningful reforms this year and emphasized that it is the duty of businesses to get involved in the process and advocate more for their interests and needs. Essentially, we all need to help New York get back in business – we need to lower the cost of living and the costs for businesses, create jobs, and focus on the businesses already in New York State and the innovation economy. □

Highlights from Gov. Cuomo's Budget

- Repeals the IDA cost-recovery tax going forward, but keeps tax in place for IDA assessments through March 31, 2011.
- Authorizes NYSERDA to fund part of its program and DEC's climate change programs from assessments on electric and gas utilities
- Establishes a surcharge on purses at harness and thoroughbred racetracks.
- Extends alternative fuel tax exemption for one year.
- Financial services ITC: Extended for one year
- Makes permanent UDC loan powers
- Increases maximum linked deposit loans from \$1 million to \$2 million
- Authorizes the Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets to establish a competitive grants program to fund agricultural research, marketing and education initiatives.
- Expands the Excelsior Jobs Program by extending the current tax benefit period from five to ten years, providing an additional \$250 million in total program tax credits for years 2016 – 2019, and offering an enhanced package of tax credits
- Empire State Economic Development Fund - \$25 million
- Regional Economic Development Council initiative - \$200 million in competitive resources to be provided
- Economic Transformation Fund - \$100 million for communities impacted by prison consolidations
- I Love NY advertising - \$3.6 million
- Tourism Matching Grant program - \$3.8 million
- International trade - \$1.1 million
- NYC Empowerment Zone - \$10 million
- Power for Jobs program: Extends program for 2 years. A new 955 MW “Recharge NY” program would take effect thereafter
- STAR Exemption: increase is limited to 2 percent annually