



COPAFS

Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 27th, 2019

CONTACT: Corinna Turbes
corinna.turbes@copafs.org

Supreme Court issues complicated ruling on 2020 Census

Today, the Supreme Court ruled that the explanation given by Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross for adding the citizenship question to the 2020 Census was insufficient. The Court says, that while adding the question may be constitutional, the Commerce Department must provide a better explanation.

In the majority opinion, Chief Justice John Roberts writes that the “decision to reinstate a citizenship question cannot adequately be explained in terms of DOJ’s request for improved citizenship data to better enforce the [Voting Rights Act].” The Court’s ruling allows space for the question to be added, provided the Department offers a justification that can pass legal scrutiny in the Southern District of New York.

“Whatever the justifications are for adding this question, the fact remains that adding an untested question to the decennial census risks doing untold damage to a crucial part of our data infrastructure and will have ripple effects for the next 10 years,” explains Cynthia Clark, Executive Director of the Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics.

It is unclear if the Department of Commerce will issue a new explanation for the addition of the question. The Census Bureau’s own plan for 2020 Census operations has the printing of questionnaires set to begin on July 1.

“There simply isn’t time. Any delay in printing puts the entire operation at risk, and will impact how all other operations are conducted,” continued Clark. “The Supreme Court issued a reasonable decision. It is time to focus all our attention on getting the most accurate count possible.”

###

COPAFS was founded in 1980 to act as an advocate for the development and dissemination of high-quality Federal statistics, to increase the level and scope of knowledge about developments affecting Federal statistics, and to encourage dialogue between its member associations and organizations and the Federal statistical agencies. For further information, visit the COPAFS website at <http://www.copafs.org/>.