



THE CENSUS PROJECT

Supporting quality measures of America's economy and places

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1998-2001

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July 29, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson and Leader Jeffries,

On behalf of The Census Project, a broad-based coalition of business, civic, human services, state and local government, and academic groups committed to supporting the U.S. Census Bureau's mission to produce full, fair, complete, and accurate data, the undersigned groups write to express our concerns regarding the Fiscal Year 2025 Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) Appropriations bill that passed the House Appropriations Committee on July 9, 2024. The proposed bill would undermine the ability of the Census Bureau to meet its constitutional mandate as the result of inadequate funding, and a menacing policy provision (Sec. 621) that would ruin response rates to all Census Bureau surveys and result in the decennial census and the American Community Survey (ACS) counting barely a third of the country.

Funding

The committee's bill provides the U.S. Census Bureau with \$1.354 billion—the same funding level that the committee recommended in Fiscal Year (FY) 2024. This amount is below the agency's final FY 2024 funding level and the Administration's budget request, as well as the amount [that over 120 national, state, and local organizations urged Congress to provide the Bureau in Fiscal Year 2025](#).

Fiscal Year 2025 marks the midpoint in the decade-long planning process for the next decennial census in which preparations and costs begin to exponentially increase. In FY 2025, the Bureau will finalize plans and preparations for the 2026 Census Test, the first of two major field tests. The outcome of these tests will inform key facets of the 2030 Census.

Inadequate funding in the mid-2010s adversely affected the conduct of the 2020 Census. When Congress failed to meet the Administration's request for 2020 Census planning in Fiscal Years 2012-2017, the Census Bureau had to cancel every planned test in a rural area and on American Indian reservations, including two of three dress rehearsal sites in 2018. After the census, the Bureau's check of its

work showed a net undercount of 5.64 percent on American Indian reservations, and a net undercount of 2.58 percent in areas counted with a modified census packet delivery method called “Update/Leave,” which is used primarily in rural areas.

Further, as a result of funding cutbacks, the Bureau also was unable to test new methods to count group facilities (e.g. college dorms, prisons, and nursing homes) electronically in the 2020 Census, instead falling back on more costly, time-consuming, and less accurate paper-based procedures. The Bureau acknowledged an undercount of people living in Group Quarters and offered localities a chance to submit more data after the census was finished to update those numbers—a bureaucratic burden that could have potentially been avoided if the proposed new enumeration methods had been assessed.

As the U.S. learned in the run up to the 2020 Census, postponing planning for decennial operations introduces greater risk to a successful outcome. Adequate support for decennial census preparations now will reduce the risk of requiring unplanned, additional funding in the peak years at the end of the decade and help ensure that the 2030 Census is conducted in an inclusive, cost-effective, and efficient manner.

Policy Provision: Sec. 621

The committee’s bill would drastically undermine the quality and availability of census survey data, especially for small populations and areas, with Section 621, which states that *“None of the funds in this Act may be used to enforce involuntary compliance, or to inquire more than twice for voluntary compliance with any survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census.”*

If adopted, this language would prohibit enforcement of the mandatory response requirement on the decennial headcount and the American Community Survey (ACS), while also restricting the Bureau’s ability to conduct non-response follow-up operations across all of its surveys.

This provision would have an especially devastating impact on the decennial census, which must send way more than just two invitations to secure self-response. According to data from the Census Quality Reinforcement Task Force, **the 2020 Census had counted only 28% of U.S. households after the first two contacts, as of March 25, 2020, and no state had achieved even 35% coverage. Section 621, by cutting off contacts after that point, including non-response follow up operations, would leave as much as two-thirds of the U.S. uncouned in the 2030 Census.**

The provision would likewise undermine coverage in the ACS and the Current Population Survey, which usually require 2.5 to 3 follow up contacts. Major business, economic, and demographic surveys that have multiple follow up contact strategies would likewise be adversely impacted. These limitations on contacts with households, businesses, retail purchasers, wholesalers, manufacturers and others will have serious consequences on the reliability and accuracy of the many [economic indicators](#) produced by the Census Bureau, which move markets in the U.S. and around the world.

Given the havoc this provision would have on all of the Bureau's surveys, and the resulting inability to produce statistically-valid results, we urge removal of this provision as the bill proceeds through the legislative process.

Thank you for considering our views as you proceed toward a final FY 2025 CJS appropriations bill. We look forward to working with you to produce a final FY 2025 CJS bill that provides the U.S. Census Bureau with robust funding and empowers the agency to fulfill its mission.

Sincerely,

National

American Anthropological Association

American Civil Liberties Union

American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees

American Statistical Association

Arab American Institute (AAI)

Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote (APIAVote)

Association of Population Centers

Association of Public Data Users

Autistic Self Advocacy Network

Butler Family Fund

Center for American Progress

Chambers Initiative

Children's HealthWatch

Claritas

Coalition on Human Needs

Columbia Univ., Mailman School of Public Health

Communities United for Status & Protection (CUSP)

Community Health Aligning Revitalization Resilience & Sustainability

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces

Council for Community and Economic Research

Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics (COPAFS)

Decision Demographics, LLC

Demographic Analytics Advisors

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)

First Focus Campaign for Children

Funders' Committee for Civic Participation (FCCP)

Gerontological Society of America

Government Information Watch

Hamai Consulting
Human Rights Campaign
Insights Association
Institute for Policy Studies, Poverty Project
Institute for Women's Policy Research
Jewish Women International
Lawyers for Good Government
League of Women Voters of the United States
Liberation in a Generation
Moreno & Associates
Movement Advancement Project
NALEO Educational Fund
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Association for Business Economics (NABE)
National Association of Regional Councils
National Coalition for Literacy
National Community Action Partnership
National Community Development Association
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Nielsen
Pacific Market Research
Population Association of America
Prentice Foundation
Project on Government Oversight
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
State Health Access Data Assistance Center, UMN School of Public Health
The Consortium of Social Science Associations
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
The Sikh Coalition
Tulane University
Urban and Regional Information Systems Association
Whitman-Walker Institute
ZERO TO THREE

State-Level

Catalyst California	CA
Center for Population Studies, University of Mississippi	MS
Colorado Civic Engagement Roundtable	CO
Connecticut Data Collaborative	CT

Crescent City Media Group		LA
Equality California		CA
Fair Count Inc.		GA
Florida Philanthropic Network		FL
Georgia Coalition for the Peoples Agenda		GA
Georgia Federation of Democratic Women		GA
Housing Action Illinois		IL
Hunger Free Vermont		VT
MACS 2030 - Minnesotans for the American Community Survey and 2030 Census		MN
Maine Philanthropy Center		ME
Minnesota Council on Foundations		MN
Minnesota Hmong Chamber of Commerce		MN
N.Y. Elections, Census & Redistricting Institute (at New York Law School)		NY
NC Counts Coalition		NC
One Arizona		AZ
PARENT POSSIBLE		CO
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children		PA
Public Health Advocates		CA
Public Justice Center		MD
SC Appleseed Legal Justice Center		SC
Silver State Equality		NV
South Carolina Program for Infant/Toddler Care		SC
The Bingham Program		ME
UMass Donahue Institute / Massachusetts FSCPE Representative		MA
University of Florida Bureau of Economic & Business Research		FL
University of Minnesota, SHADAC		MN
University of Washington, School of Public Health, Department of Epidemiology		WA
VOICES for Alabama's Children		AL
Workplace Justice Project		LA
Wyoming Community Foundation		WY

Local/City/Regional

Apalachee Regional Planning Council	Tallahassee	FL
Asian American Organizing Project	St. Paul	MN
Center on Race, Poverty & Environment	Delano	CA
Committee for a Better New Orleans	New Orleans	LA
Community Information Now	San Antonio	TX
CUNY Mapping Service, Center for Urban Research, CUNY Graduate Center	New York	NY

Data You Can Use	Milwaukee	WI
DataWorks NC	Durham	NC
E. René' Soule' & Associates	Hammond	LA
Fairfield County's Community Foundation	Norwalk	CT
Kallisto Research LP	Houston	TX
Maui Economic Opportunity Inc.	Wailuku	HI
Merced County Department of Public Health	Merced	CA
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Boston	MA
Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce	Minneapolis	MN
Northspan	Duluth	MN
Oak Park Health Dept.	Oak Park	IL
Paraquad	St. Louis	MO
Passport NOLA	New Orleans	LA
Region Nine Development Commission	Mankato	MN
ResourceFull Consulting	New Orleans	LA
RLS Demographics, Inc.	Rensselaerville	NY
San Diego for Every Child	San Diego	CA
Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG)	Detroit	MI
The Data Center of Southeast Louisiana	New Orleans	LA
The Healing Trust	Nashville	TN
The Minneapolis Foundation	Minneapolis	MN
Twin Cities Research Group	St. Paul	MN