



June 21, 2016

Protect the Census: Oppose the Vitter Amendment

Dear Senator:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 national organizations to promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, we urge you to oppose the Vitter amendment (Amendment # 4687) to the FY2017 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (S. 2837). This amendment would prohibit the use of funds by the Census Bureau for the 2020 Census unless it includes questions regarding U.S. citizenship and immigration status.

The Leadership Conference believes that an accurate census count is a vital civil rights objective and is deeply committed to ensuring that the Census Bureau provides our nation with the most accurate population count. The Vitter amendment is a thinly veiled attempt to exclude noncitizens and/or undocumented residents from the census counts used for congressional apportionment. It is an assault on our Constitution and will cause unnecessary confusion and delay.

The 14th Amendment to the Constitution clearly states that the apportionment of members of the House of Representatives is based on a full count of residents in each state. This amendment was enacted in part to repeal the provisions of Article I in the Constitution, which counted a slave as only three-fifths of a person for apportionment purposes. The Vitter amendment evokes this shameful legacy.

The Vitter amendment will intimidate individuals from participating in the Census. Asking about immigration status in the 2020 census is unnecessarily intrusive and will raise concerns among all respondents – both native-born and immigrant – about the confidentiality and privacy of information provided to the government. This will deter many residents from responding, and result in an inaccurate Census count.

For these reasons, we urge you to oppose the Vitter amendment. If you have any questions, please contact Corrine Yu, Managing Policy Director, at (202) 466-5670.

Sincerely,

Wade Henderson
President & CEO

Nancy Zirkin
Executive Vice President

Officers

Chair

Judith L. Lichtman
National Partnership for
Women & Families

Vice Chairs

Jacqueline Pata
National Congress of American Indians
Thomas A. Saenz
Mexican American Legal
Defense and Educational Fund
Hilary Shelton
NAACP

Secretary

Jo Ann Jenkins
AARP

Treasurer

Lee A. Saunders
American Federation of State,
County & Municipal Employees

Board of Directors

Helena Berger
American Association of
People with Disabilities
Cornell William Brooks
NAACP
Kristin Clarke
Lawyers' Committee for
Civil Rights Under Law
Lily Eskelsen Garcia
National Education Association
Marcia D. Greenberger
National Women's Law Center
Chad Griffin
Human Rights Campaign
Linda D. Hallman
AAUW
Mary Kay Henry
Service Employees International Union
Sherrilyn Ifill
NAACP Legal Defense and
Educational Fund, Inc.
Michael B. Keegan
People for the American Way
Samer E. Khalaf
American-Arab
Anti-Discrimination Committee
Marc Morial
National Urban League
Mee Moua
Asian Americans Advancing Justice |
AAJC
Janet Murguia
National Council of La Raza
Debra Ness
National Partnership for
Women & Families
Terry O'Neill
National Organization for Women
Priscilla Ouchida
Japanese American Citizens League
Rabbi Jonah Pesner
Religious Action Center
Of Reform Judaism
Anthony Romero
American Civil Liberties Union
Shanna Smith
National Fair Housing Alliance
Richard L. Trumka
AFL-CIO
Randi Weingarten
American Federation of Teachers
Wylecia Wiggs Harris
League of Women Voters of the
United States
Dennis Williams
International Union, UAW

Policy and Enforcement

Committee Chair

Michael Lieberman
Anti-Defamation League

President & CEO

Wade J. Henderson
Executive Vice President & COO
Karen McGill Lawson