



June 17, 2019

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2020 IS CENSUS YEAR!

Support the Census Bureau's Funding Level in the FY 2020 CJS

Appropriations Bill;

Oppose Any Amendment that Would Undermine the Accuracy of the Census

Dear Representative,

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 write to express our support for the robust funding level for the constitutionally required 2020 Census in the FY 2020 Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) Appropriations Committee bill. **We urge you to vote YES on final passage and NO on any amendment that would undermine the accuracy of the census or prevent the Census Bureau from counting all communities equally well.** The Leadership Conference will include both of these votes in our voting record for the 116th Congress.

The Leadership Conference considers a fair and accurate census among the most significant civil rights issues facing the country today. Census data ensure fair, proportionate voting representation for all Americans. Federal funding for key programs, such as education, health care, and rural broadband access, is determined by census data. Further, census data assist federal agencies, like the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, in monitoring discrimination.

The U.S. Constitution gives Congress responsibility for getting the census right. However, certain populations and communities are at greater risk of being missed than others, including low-income households in rural and urban areas, young children, people of color, and immigrants. Additional populations, including older Americans and remote communities such as American Indian tribal lands and reservations, may experience new or increased vulnerability due to major changes in methodology, such as relying on the Internet as a primary way for households to respond to the 2020 Census. Sufficient resources are necessary to support 2020 Census operations designed to improve accuracy in hard-to-count communities, which are in every state. An underfunded census would jeopardize the availability and validity of data used to make essential economic, political, and planning decisions in the nation's private, public, and non-profit sectors over the next decade.



H.R. 3055 allocates \$8.45 billion for the Census Bureau, which includes \$7.5 billion in dedicated funding for the 2020 Census. This funding recommendation reflects what The Leadership Conference believes the Census Bureau needs to conduct a successful 2020 Census, enabling the Bureau to meet the growing challenges and threats that could affect success in all communities, including cyber-attacks, natural disasters, growing distrust of government that could depress response rates in many communities, and the digital divide (especially in rural, remote, and low-income communities). The significant funding boost over FY 2019 is in line historically with ramp-ups for a census year.

H.R. 3055, Division A, will ensure a 2020 Census that is equally successful in all communities by:

- Including sufficient funding to empower the Census Bureau to invest in key activities — such as information technology, cybersecurity, and outreach to hard-to-count populations — necessary to conduct a successful 2020 Census.
- Including a contingency fund that the Commerce Department previously said it needs to address unforeseen circumstances, such as natural disasters and cyber-attacks, which threaten the completion of an accurate census.
- Directing the Bureau to spend more of its available resources this year (FY 2019) on expanded targeted promotion, outreach to vital local partners, and scaling and securing vulnerable IT systems, instead of holding back on critical preparations in order to carry over funding to FY 2020. Money spent wisely now will help keep overall costs down by boosting the likelihood of cost-effective self-response and reducing the possibility of IT failures and dangerous cyberattacks.

We also urge you to oppose any amendment that would undermine an accurate census or prevent the Census Bureau from counting all communities equally well. This includes any amendment to strip Section 534 of Division A, which would prohibit any questions on the 2020 Census that were not part of the 2018 End-to-End Census Test (the “dress rehearsal”), or any amendment to require a question on citizenship and/or immigration status in the 2020 Census. Adding untested and unnecessary questions to the census form at the 11th hour will derail years of research and testing and result in an expensive, yet ultimately failed, census.

In eight months, the decennial census will be in full swing. By all accounts, the 2020 Census will be the largest, most difficult enumeration in our nation’s history. The U.S. population is increasingly diverse — geographically, culturally, and linguistically — with households becoming more complex, and a greater share of residents falling into hard-to-count categories. Further complicating preparations and implementation, extreme natural disasters (e.g., hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfires, and flooding) will require modified, more costly census methods to ensure an accurate enumeration in recovering communities. In addition, the focus on Internet response will be challenging for communities without reliable broadband service and households lacking internet access or familiarity.



We urge you to protect and preserve the quality of the census and provide adequate funding at this pivotal time in the decennial cycle. Thank you for your consideration of our request and concerns. If you need further information or have any questions regarding this issue, please contact Corrine Yu, Leadership Conference Senior Program Director, at 202-466-5670.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Vanita Gupta". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Vanita Gupta
President and CEO

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Kristine Lucius". The signature is cursive and elegant, with a long, sweeping underline.

Kristine Lucius
Executive Vice President for Policy
and Government Affairs