

THE CENSUS PROJECT

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1973-76 and 1979-81

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U.S. Census Bureau Director
2019-2021

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2009-2012

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U.S. Census Bureau Director
1998

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2012-2013

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October xx, 2025

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Vice Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Collins, Vice Chair Murray, Chairman Cole, and Ranking Member DeLauro,

We, the undersigned organizations affiliated with [The Census Project](#), a broad-based coalition of census stakeholders and data users in the private, public, non-profit, and academic sectors committed to supporting the U.S. Census Bureau's mission to produce full, fair, complete, and accurate data, are writing to express our support for the Census Bureau in the final Fiscal Year 2026 Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) Appropriations bill. **Specifically, we request that the final FY 2026 CJS bill provide the Census Bureau with no less than \$1.6765 billion—the amount recommended by the House Appropriations Committee and requested by the Administration. We also strongly urge that Section 605, a provision in the House bill, be stricken.**

Funding

At a minimum, the Census Bureau needs the level recommended by the House Appropriations Committee, and requested by the Administration, to not only sustain its current operations, but also to prepare for the 2030 Census. FY 2026 is a crucial year in the ramp up to the 2030 Census in which preparations (and costs) begin to exponentially increase. In FY 2026, the Census Bureau will conduct the 2026 Census Test in six geographically- and demographically-diverse sites nationwide. The test is a critically important component of the decennial census planning cycle in which the Bureau evaluates new enumeration strategies and data collection technologies in the field. As we learned in the run up to the 2020 Census, shortchanging funding for testing at this point in the planning process 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 improve the agency's ability to conduct an inclusive, accurate count in 2030.

Section 605

The bill approved by the House Appropriations Committee includes a policy provision, Section 605, that we fear will adversely affect the quality and availability of census survey data—especially for small populations and areas. Section 605 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, we are concerned that 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 a devastating impact on the decennial census, which historically has had to send more than two invitations to self-respond in order to count more than half of U.S. households. According to analysis done by the Census Quality Reinforcement task force, after two contacts the 2020 Census had only counted 28 percent of all U.S. households. The provision would likewise undermine coverage in the ACS and the Current Population Survey, which require more than 3 and on average 2.5 follow-up contacts, respectively. Major business, economic, and demographic surveys that have multiple follow-up contact strategies would likewise be adversely impacted. Given the havoc this provision would have on all of the Bureau’s surveys, we urge removal of this provision in the final FY 2026 CJS appropriations bill.

Thank you for considering our views as you negotiate a final FY 2026 CJS appropriations bill. We look forward to working with you to produce a final FY 2026 CJS bill that provides the U.S. Census Bureau with robust funding and empowers the agency to fulfill its Constitutionally-mandated mission.

Sincerely,