

THE CENSUS PROJECT

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

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U.S. Census Bureau Director
1973-76 and 1979-81

Dr. Steven Dillingham
U.S. Census Bureau Director
2019-2021

Dr. Robert Groves
U.S. Census Bureau Director
2009-2012

Mr. James F. Holmes
U.S. Census Bureau Director
1998

Mr. Thomas Mesenbourg, Jr.
U.S. Census Bureau Acting Director
2012-2013

Dr. Ken Prewitt
U.S. Census Bureau Director
1998-2001

Dr. Marty Farnsworth Riche
U.S. Census Bureau Director
1994-1998

Mr. John Thompson
U.S. Census Bureau Director
2013-2017

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Population Association of America and
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National Association of Latino Elected and
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April 3, 2025

Senator Jerry Moran
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Hal Rogers
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20005

Senator Chris Van Hollen
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Grace Meng
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Senator Moran, Senator Van Hollen, Representative Rogers, and Representative Meng,

As you work on the Fiscal Year 2026 Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) appropriations bill we the undersigned organizations write to support robust funding for the U.S. Census Bureau, specifically \$2 billion as recommended by The Census Project, and to urge you to reverse the flat funding that the Bureau has received for the last two years.

The Census Project is a coalition of over 800 national, state, and local organizations representing data users and census stakeholders in the public, private, non-profit, and academic sectors that support the mission of the U.S. Census Bureau, especially an accurate, cost-effective, and inclusive decennial census and American Community Survey (ACS).

2030 Census

The decennial census is the nation's largest civilian peacetime mobilization, determining not only apportionment of the U.S. House of Representatives (and state and local redistricting), but also the allocation of approximately \$2.8 trillion in annual federal funding. Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 is a crucial year in the decade-long ramp-up to the 2030 Census in which preparations and costs continue to exponentially increase. Next year, the Census Bureau will conduct the 2026 Census Test in six geographically and demographically diverse sites nationwide. The tests are historically a major milestone each decade in census planning, marking the start of a major ramp up in funding to ensure everyone resident is counted. The outcome of these tests will inform the operational design of the 2030 Census.

As we learned in the run up to the 2020 Census, short-changing funding for testing at this point in the planning process introduces greater risk to a successful outcome. 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. As this example illustrates, postponing planning for decennial operations introduces greater risk to a fair and complete count of the population. Adequate support for decennial census preparations now will reduce the risk of requiring unplanned, emergency funding in the peak years at the end of the decade, improving the agency's ability to conduct a complete, accurate, and cost-efficient count in 2030.

American Community Survey (ACS)

In addition to fulfilling its Constitutional mandate to prepare for the next decennial census, the Bureau needs robust funding to sustain and enhance another facet of the decennial program, the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS, which replaced the decennial census long form in 2005 during the Bush Administration, is a nationwide, continuous survey of about three and a half million households. It is the only source of comparable (across geography), consistent (across time), timely (updated annually) and high-quality demographic, socio-economic, and housing data for all U.S. communities down to the neighbourhood and census tract levels. Other than the decennial, it is the only government survey that makes it possible to accurately compare, for example, Visalia, CA to Cedar Rapids, IA. Data users in the private, public, and non-profit sectors use ACS data every day to determine where and how to locate businesses and factories, build schools, hospitals, and roads, and target services to vulnerable populations, such as children, veterans, and older Americans. Scientists and market researchers use it to produce statistically representative samples for surveys and opinion polls. Further, ACS data are used to enforce civil rights laws and protect people from discrimination.

Years of underinvestment have degraded ACS data, precluded necessary increases in the survey's sample size and shortchanged the Bureau's ability to address steadily declining response rates, or revise content, to accelerate research to reduce respondent burden, and make other improvements that stakeholders have recommended for years. To restore and enhance the ACS as part of its FY 2026 funding recommendation, The Census Project urges Congress to add \$100 to \$300 million to sustain and enhance the ACS.

Other Census Surveys and Operations

In recent years, the Census Bureau released plans to modernize and restore, among other things, the Population Estimates Program, the Current Population Survey, and Survey of Income and Program Participation and to keep its broader data collection and dissemination initiatives on schedule. Given the relatively flat funding level that the Bureau received in FY 2024 and FY 2025 however, census stakeholders fear that these initiatives are stalling. Reduced or flat funding for the Census Bureau at this juncture threatens the stability of these vital initiatives which, if fully supported, could transform how the Census Bureau performs and inspire greater efficiencies throughout the federal statistical system.

While we appreciate the challenges that the current fiscal environment presents, this is exactly the wrong time in the long-expected ramp-up to the 2030 Census for Congress to constrain funding for the U.S. Census Bureau. To reiterate, the agency needs robust, reliable funding, especially at this point in the decennial census planning process, to proceed with critical activities that will help secure the success of the 2030 Census. In addition, it needs funding to pursue and accelerate research that has the potential

to reduce respondent burden, improve the quality, timeliness, and accessibility of federal data overall and to benefit other statistical agencies.

Thank you for considering our recommendation that the Census Bureau receive \$2 billion in FY 2026. We look forward to collaborating with you and your colleagues.

Sincerely,

National

Academic Pediatric Association
afrolatin@ forum
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Educational Research Association
American Pediatric Society
American Statistical Association
Arab American Institute (AAI)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC
Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote (APIAVote)
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs
Association of National Advertisers
Association of Population Centers
Association of Public Data Users
BGD
Claritas
Coalition on Human Needs
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics
Decision Demographics, LLC
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)
Funders' Committee for Civic Participation
Gerontological Society of America
Government Information Watch
Insights Association
League of Women Voters of the United States
Movement Advancement Project
NALEO Educational Fund
National Association for Business Economics
National Association of Home Builders
National Association of REALTORS®
National Coalition on Black Civic Participation
National Community Development Association
Nielsen
Pediatric Policy Council
Population Association of America
Research Allies for Lifelong Learning
Social Explorer, Inc.
Society for Pediatric Research
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)

The Institute for Health Research & Policy at Whitman-Walker
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
Urban and Regional Information Systems Association

State-Level

Asian American Federation		NY
Equality California		CA
Housing Action Illinois		IL
MACS 2030 - Minnesotans for the ACS and 2030 Census		MN
Maine Children's Alliance		ME
Michigan League for Public Policy		MI
Minnesota Council on Foundations		MN
N.Y. Elections, Census & Redistricting Institute (New York Law School)		NY
Our Children Oregon		OR
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children		PA
Public Justice Center		MD
Silver State Equality-Nevada		NV
The Bingham Program		ME
VOICES for Alabama's Children		AL
Voices for Children in Nebraska		NE
Voices for Racial Justice		MN

Local/City/Regional

Minneapolis Foundation	Minneapolis	MN
RLS Demographics, Inc.	Rensselaerville	NY