



The Census Project

December 13, 2016

President-elect Donald J. Trump
Presidential Transition Headquarters
1800 F Street NW, Room G117
Washington, DC 20270-0117

Dear President-elect Trump:

We are writing to you as participants in The Census Project (www.thecensusproject.org), a broad, nonpartisan coalition of stakeholders who rely on accurate, timely, and comprehensive Census Bureau data for decision-making and resource allocation across all sectors. Our efforts focus on ensuring an accurate 2020 Census, as the U.S. Constitution requires, and comprehensive American Community Survey (ACS), which updates the census throughout the decade.

Our stakeholders represent business and industry; state and local governments; civil rights advocates; researchers and scientific associations; foundations; and nonprofits focused on transportation, housing, child and family welfare, education, and other vital community services. On behalf of the thousands of Americans that The Census Project organizations represent, we congratulate you on your election and look forward to working with your new Administration.

The importance of a fair and accurate decennial census cannot be overstated. The U.S. Constitution requires a census for apportionment and, by extension, redistricting; the constitutional standard of equal representation means that the Census Bureau must get the count right. Census and ACS data guide state and local government planning and decision-making across every sector, including where to build new schools, add bus and subway lines, and set aside land for affordable housing. Economic development agencies and their private sector partners use census and ACS data to identify community needs and leverage funding to create jobs and sustained economic activity. Furthermore, census data guide private sector investments, save taxpayer money through targeted resource allocation, and inform good public policy.

To ensure the best count possible in 2020, we urge your Administration to make the needs of the Census Bureau a top priority. The 2020 Census has the potential to be one of the most innovative decennial censuses in modern history, harnessing unprecedented use of technology, including Internet response, digital mapping and imagery to update address lists, and administrative data to reduce the cost of address list updating and field operations. If successful, these new counting methods and operational reforms could save taxpayers \$5 billion over the lifecycle of the 2020 Census and produce a cost-efficient, accurate census. However, the Census Bureau must finalize the census design and complete IT system and operational development within the next year, in order to have confidence in these sweeping reforms in advance of a 'dress rehearsal' in 2018.

A project of the Communications Consortium Media Center
1300 I Street NW, Suite 400E, Washington, DC 20005
202.326.8700
www.TheCensusProject.org

Respectfully, we encourage your Administration to take the following steps:

1. **Allow for continuity in Census Bureau leadership**—The current Census Director, John Thompson, is eligible for reappointment to a second, five-year term in 2017, or may continue serving as Director for up to one year until a successor is appointed. We urge you to provide the Census Bureau with steady leadership, particularly this close to the 2020 Census, by quickly nominating and urging the Senate to confirm a Census Director, and to ensure that the next director has demonstrated management skills and expertise in complex data collection activities, in accordance with the Presidential Appointment Efficiency and Streamlining Act of 2011, as well as the support of the broad census stakeholder community.
2. **Support and advocate for full funding for the 2020 Census and ACS** —Three years from now, the 2020 Census will be underway. Many years of research, testing, evaluation, and development activities will culminate in the 2018 End-to-End Census Test, when all systems and operations are integrated in a census-like environment. We urge your Administration to support the Census Bureau at this critical juncture when activities move from testing to preparation and then implementation, and to prioritize funding for the 2020 Census in your FY 2018 budget submission. Furthermore, we request your support for continued funding for the ACS at a level that preserves (at a minimum) the current sample size and, thus, reliable data for all communities and smaller population groups.
3. **Defend a mandatory, fully funded American Community Survey (ACS)** — The ACS yields irreplaceable, high-quality annual data on key social and economic characteristics for every community in the United States. The survey’s mandatory status is an essential aspect of the quality of the data, and tests of a voluntary approach have proven to lower response rates significantly and increase annual costs as much as \$100 million. Small communities and less populous areas, such as rural counties, would be adversely affected the most if response to the ACS were voluntary. We urge your Administration to defend a mandatory ACS and to fund the survey sufficiently to sustain a robust sample size, as well as continue the Census Bureau’s important work to reduce respondent burden and improve the survey’s content. More information about the perils of a voluntary ACS is posted on The Census Project home page at: <https://censusproject.files.wordpress.com/2015/12/acs-whyweneedthesurvey-factsheet-march2016.pdf>

The beginning of your Administration coincides with a pivotal period in the 2020 Census cycle, as the Census Bureau pivots from planning to operational development and field preparations over the next several years. The Census Project coalition is prepared to help you during this phase and to work with you to achieve an accurate and fair census and preserve a robust American Community Survey. Please do not hesitate to contact The Census Project Co-Director, Mary Jo Hoeksema (maryjo@popassoc.org), if we can be of assistance.

Once again, congratulations on your election. We wish you and your Administration all the best in the future.

Sincerely,

American Statistical Association
 Asian American Advancing Justice | AAJC
 Association of Public Data Users

Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA)
Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER)
Marketing Research Association
NAACP
NALEO Educational Fund
National LGBTQ Task Force
National Low Income Housing Coalition
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Nielsen
OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates
Partnership for America's Children
Population Association of America
National Association of REALTORS®
Prison Policy Initiative
State Voices