

Don't Raid the Census Bureau Budget!

The Census Bureau is more than a third of the way through the decade+ long planning process for the 2030 Census; planning for the first of two major field tests starts this year.

Underinvestments now lead to inaccuracies and inefficiencies in the future: *The Census Bureau needs modest but steady annual funding increases in the middle of the decade, to help ensure it is ready to take the most accurate census possible in every community and can continue to produce high-quality demographic and economic statistics every year. Insufficient funding will put efforts to reduce undercounts of rural and low-income residents, young children, and people of color in jeopardy. Inaccurate counts will lead to inefficient policies and investments for the next decade!*

Consider these facts: The census is the nation's largest, most complex peacetime mobilization. It is the federal government's first responsibility in the U.S. Constitution and it is carried out by the Census Bureau. There are no do-overs when it comes to taking the census; the Census Bureau has to get it right the first time.

At stake is the fair apportionment of U.S. House of Representatives seats; the fair drawing of district lines from Congress to local school districts; and the prudent, fair allocation of \$2.8 trillion a year in census-guided federal assistance to states, localities, individuals and families, and nonprofits. The cost of the census pales beside the critical investments in roads and transit, schools, veterans' services, health care, rural broadband, low-income housing, and other quality-of-life improvements that depend on accurate census-derived data.

It takes more than a decade to plan and conduct a census. The Census Bureau needs funding early in the cycle to research and test new methods that could reduce the persistent disproportionate undercount of rural and low-income households, people of color, and young children, while enumerating easier-to-count communities in more cost-effective ways.

Of course, the Census Bureau produces vital data for policymakers and the public through many other ongoing programs, including the American Community Survey (ACS), five-year Economic Census, annual population estimates, and Current Population Survey (which collects unemployment and labor force statistics). Cutting these vital statistical activities will reduce the accuracy and quality of data that also guide public, private, and non-profit sector decision-making day in and day out.

In 2024, in addition to its ongoing statistical programs, the Census Bureau will continue focused research and small-scale testing for the 2030 Census. It also will select a design framework *and* draft the initial operational plan, begin preparing for local address updating (required by law), select sites for the 2026 Census Test, and consult with stakeholders and Tribal Nations on modernizing the collection of race and ethnicity data, among other planning activities.

BOTTOM LINE: Don't treat the Census Bureau like a piggy bank!

The accuracy of the count in *your* district/state could depend on it!