



The Census Project

FY2015 U.S. CENSUS BUREAU APPROPRIATIONS *Why Full Funding Matters*

In five years, preparations for the 2020 Decennial Census will be in full swing. Census forms will be at the printer; Regional Census Centers and some Local Census Offices will be open. Census workers will be canvassing targeted neighborhoods to confirm the address list. Hundreds of thousands of national, state, and local Census Partners will be launching outreach campaigns. The communications team will be finalizing a massive campaign to promote census participation. The 2020 Census website must be ready to handle up to eight million hits a day during peak operations.

The 2020 Census must count 334 million people in more than 130 million households and group facilities, all pegged to Census Day (April 1st). Escalating costs for the 2010 count led the Census Bureau to explore more modern ways of reaching people, collecting and processing data, and managing field operations. The significant reforms outlined below could **save the taxpayer \$5 billion** and help produce a cost-efficient and accurate census. **But these reforms won't happen if Congress does not provide adequate funding for the Census Bureau now!**

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- **Leverage technology to offer multiple response options, including the Internet and smartphones. Cyber-security and volume are key challenges; people responding electronically also must be counted at the correct address.**
 - **Automate field data collection using call centers and handheld devices for enumerators, to improve efficiency and lower costs.**
 - **Use administrative records (data the government already collects) to enumerate households that do not self-respond.**
 - **Target pre-census address canvassing only to areas experiencing housing changes, using administrative data to update and confirm addresses.**
 - **Improve the management of field staff using administrative data to determine the sequence of phone calls, plan travel routes, and prioritize caseloads in real-time.**
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These reforms are promising, but enormously complex, and require significant lead-time for research, testing, and development. **Using unproven methods puts a cost-effective and accurate census at high risk. Failure to complete planned research, testing, and development on time could force the Census Bureau to fall back on older, costly, less efficient methods in 2020. FY2015 is a pivotal year in deciding which reforms to pursue.** In FY2015, the Census Bureau must:

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- **Conduct the first large 2020 Census field test, to evaluate the integration of new operations, methods, and systems.**
 - **Complete research and testing phase; select a 2020 Census design framework based on innovations that improve cost-efficiency without sacrificing data quality and accuracy. This decision is already a year behind schedule due to previous budget cuts and sequestration.**
 - **Begin four-year operational design and development phase.**
 - **Develop requirements for over 30 IT systems needed to conduct the census,**
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and establish contracting offices to oversee large contracts for IT support, which will create hundreds of jobs in subsequent years.

- **Hire hundreds of new employees to manage and implement design and development activities and to conduct field tests.**

Also in FY2015, the Census Bureau will complete a comprehensive review of questions on the American Community Survey (ACS) — part of the decennial census that gives us irreplaceable, high-quality annual data on key social and economic characteristics for every community in the U.S. — and prepare for the 2016 National Content Test. This review will ensure that the ACS only collects data needed to implement federal programs and policies. The Census Bureau also is streamlining ACS operations to improve the experience of households in the survey.

Why Congress Needs an Accurate, Well-Executed Census

An accurate census and robust American Community Survey are the foundation of fair political representation and prudent allocation and stewardship of tax dollars at the federal, state, and local levels.

- Fair apportionment of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and state legislatures depends on an accurate census.
- Census data are used to draw congressional and legislative districts and to allocate representation on city councils, school boards, and other municipal bodies.
- Decennial census data guide the allocation of nearly a third of all federal assistance to state and local governments (\$450 billion annually), accounting for three-quarters of all federal grants.
- Census and ACS data are a primary source of information for State and local emergency planning agencies. These agencies rely on the data to prepare emergency preparation, evacuation, and response plans (for example, when hurricanes and tornados strike).
- ACS data guide the allocation of more than \$415 billion annually in federal assistance to state and local governments, accounting for nearly a third of all such funding and more than two-thirds of all federal grants.
- Congress uses decennial census and ACS data to allocate grants for school districts (e.g. Title I); homeland security; highway planning and construction; Medicaid; substance abuse treatment; community development; rural electrification; public transit; low income housing; special and adult education; home energy assistance; rural business and industry development loans; water and waste disposal systems; mental health services; rural broadband access; crime victim assistance; coastal zone management; outreach to disabled veterans; natural disaster recovery; and dozens of other programs.
- State and local governments use census and ACS data to plan a myriad of services and direct resources to communities.
- Census and ACS data are used to implement the Voting Rights Act and ensure that citizens whose first language is not English can navigate the voting process.
- ***There are no "do-overs" for the census. The Census Bureau must get the count right the first time, and Congress must live with the results for ten years!***