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Census Project Presses for Full Funding of 2020 Census and the American Community Survey in FY2016 Omnibus Bill

WASHINGTON-In a [letter to congressional leadership](#) today, the [Census Project](#) declared the budget for planning the 2020 Census and conducting the yearly American Community Survey (ACS) to be “dangerously underfunded” in the current House and Senate appropriations bills. The broad coalition of census stakeholders urged full funding of the president’s \$1.5 billion request for the Census Bureau, including \$663 million for the next decennial census and \$257 million to maintain the ACS, in the final 2016 omnibus appropriations bill.

“Failure to provide a funding level for decennial census planning that is much closer to the President’s request of \$663 million could cost taxpayers billions of dollars, as the Census Bureau falls back on more costly but ‘tried and true’ counting methods, rather than implementing more cost-effective methods that haven’t been fully researched and tested,” stakeholders said. “The bureau cannot meet the congressional goal of conducting the 2020 Census for less than the 2010 Census without adequate investment in final research, testing and development of sweeping design reforms, to ensure operational feasibility while maintaining accuracy.”

The Census Project is a collaborative of hundreds of business, labor, civil rights, state and local government, professional, and advocacy groups focused on children, housing, health care, education, and poverty.

“Without adequate funding in FY2016, the Census Bureau would be forced to delay, curtail, or even cancel key planning and development activities that bear directly on its ability to conduct an accurate 2020 census and reduce the historic, disproportionate undercount of rural and low-income residents, people of color, immigrants, and young children,” the Census Project letter continued.

The current House bill would also force a reduction in the ACS sample size, due to insufficient funding, and make participation in the critical survey voluntary.

The proposed cuts would leave “small communities (such as towns and neighborhoods), rural and remote areas, and American Indian reservations, as well as smaller population groups (such as race and ethnic subgroups, people with disabilities, and veterans,) with less reliable data to inform decision-making and guide public and private resource allocations,” census advocates pointed out.

The Census Project also urged conferees “to reject language passed by the House (voice vote) that would make response to the American Community Survey voluntary.” Canada’s Prime Minister Justin Trudeau last week reinstated mandatory response for the country’s census long form after Conservative PM Stephen Harper’s government made the Canadian equivalent of the U.S. ACS voluntary in 2011, a move that resulted in poor quality data and increased costs.

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