

**U.S Census Bureau Appropriations: Fiscal Year 2019**  
**CENSUS STAKEHOLDER RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY**

**What the Census Bureau Needs to Ramp Up to 2020 Census and Sustain Ongoing Surveys**

Fiscal Year 2019 is a pivotal year leading up to the 2020 Census. The Census Bureau must finalize the 2020 Census operational plan and complete all census preparations, including ensuring IT system readiness and security, opening all local (“Area”) census offices, hiring 76,000 canvassers to verify the master address list, and launching early communications activities targeting hard-to-reach communities. In addition, the Census Bureau must continue to produce vital, ongoing economic, social, and demographic data to support informed decision-making by the public and private sectors.

***To conduct these activities well and bolster funding for additional necessary initiatives, census stakeholders recommend a Census Bureau appropriation of at least \$4.735 billion, to be spent in FY 2019. Within this amount, we recommend \$3.928 billion for 2020 Census preparations (Periodic Censuses and Programs account line item) and \$270 million to support the Current Population and Surveys account, to hold funding steady from FY2018.***

While the funding recommendation is \$933.5 million above the President’s FY 2019 request for the Census Bureau as a whole, it reflects a boost in funding for the 2020 Census that is only \$475.5 million above the Commerce Department’s own cost estimate for FY2019. Additional funding is necessary to ensure that the Census Bureau can meet *real and growing threats* to an accurate count across the country. *Communities and populations at risk of an undercount include rural, American Indian, and Alaska Native areas; immigrant households (regardless of legal status); minority neighborhoods; young children; and communities hit hard by the opioid crisis.*

Failure to address public concerns about cyber-security threats, fear of law enforcement and immigration authorities (especially in light of the new citizenship question), and consequences of the digital divide for census participation (e.g. rural, older, and low income households) **now** will likely require tens (or even hundreds) of millions dollars more to count unresponsive households — and threaten the overall fairness and accuracy of the census.

With additional funding in FY 2019, census stakeholders suggest four targeted investments:

- **Expand targeted communications activities (+\$100 million)** — Additional targeted advertising and promotion — the heart of the Communications Campaign — is necessary to help boost response in the wake of the threats outlined above and deep anxiety about a new, untested citizenship question.
- **Increase number of partnership staff from 1,000 to 2,000 (+\$62.5 million)** — Partnership specialists and assistants will engage, educate, and mobilize states, localities, and community-based organizations in support of the census. These “trusted messengers” are especially critical in engaging hard-to-reach population groups, including persons with disabilities, low income rural and urban households, young children, communities of color, LGBTQ individuals, and Native Americans. *For the 2010 Census, the Bureau hired 3,000 partnership staff; our recommendation moves the 2020 Census program closer to that level of effort, as appropriators directed in FY2018 report language.*
- **Expand the Bureau’s “field footprint” through more local offices and/or questionnaire assistance centers (QACs) (+\$312 million)** — The current plan for half the number of local (“Area”) census offices and no QAC’s (which helped people fill out their form voluntarily) compared to the 2010 Census, is simply insufficient in light of the Commerce Department’s lower projected self-response rate and new

threats to full participation after that projection was developed. More offices will help the Bureau respond effectively and in real-time to unanticipated counting challenges, including technology failures, recruitment difficulties, and low self-response, and increase its *o-the-ground presence* in areas that we know will be harder-to-count.

- **Fully fund Commerce Secretary's proposed contingency fund (\$314 million, or 10% of appropriation)** — A contingency fund is prudent to help the Bureau prepare for unanticipated costs associated with possible IT failures, cyber security threats, last-minute design changes based on evaluation of the 2018 End-to-End Census Test (the “dress rehearsal”), and the modified, more expensive methods needed to count areas devastated by natural disasters (e.g. hurricanes, wildfires, tornadoes). Congress historically has included a contingency fund in the decennial census appropriation.

**Finally, but importantly,** to ensure robust and uninterrupted ramp-up and preparations in these critical remaining months leading up to the 2020 Census, we urge Congress to give the Census Bureau sufficient flexibility to spend more of its FY2019 appropriation in that fiscal year and to approve requests for additional spending on vital activities based on identification of real-time risks and emerging threats to a successful census.

**Failure to allocate sufficient resources in 2019 jeopardizes a fair and accurate 2020 Census!**