

U.S. Business Community Opposes Rushing the 2020 Census: 87 organizations and companies urge Congress to extend deadlines

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The American business community banded together today in support of extending “the statutory reporting deadlines for the 2020 Census by four months.” Eighty-seven business groups and companies warned Congressional leaders that “a rushed census in the midst of the current public health crisis will harm every state, every business, and every industry in the country relying upon the resulting data.”

Organizations and companies as diverse as the Auto Care Association, Associated General Contractors of America, Consumer Technology Association, Household & Commercial Products Association, Information Technology Industry Council, Insights Association, Interactive Advertising Bureau, International Council of Shopping Centers, International Franchise Association, National Association of Broadcasters, National Association for Business Economics, National Association of Home Builders, National Association of REALTORS®, National Beer Wholesalers Association, National Retail Federation, Nielsen, Ready Nation, and U.S. Apple Association joined [the August 11, 2020 letter](#).

“The business community worries that rushing to complete the census prematurely will drastically undermine the quality of the data that we rely upon so dearly,” the letter said. “Currently, there are low response areas in every region and state. This includes not just urban centers, but also outlying rural areas. Self-response rates in rural areas are particularly anemic, presenting the possibility of the biggest undercount of rural America in modern times. A rushed census could lead to a potentially drastic reduction in political representation, government funding, and, from the business community perspective, private sector investment in such communities.”

Unless the 2020 Census counting operations are “conducted efficiently, communities most in need of resources and sound decision-making to improve quality of life and standards of living will be inadequately covered for the next decade,” the businesses and organizations explained. “Accurate data from the 2020 Census is critical to informing decision-making and resource/investment allocation in both the private and public sectors. With every other survey in the U.S. built on the population totals from the decennial count, the severe trickle-down impact of an inaccurate 2020 Census would last for a whole decade. That includes impact on the American Community Survey (ACS) and the Economic Census, two other Census Bureau programs upon which the U.S. business community more directly depends. The population and demographic data from these surveys are vital to businesses across America to promote economic development, identify potential customers and create jobs.”

The business community recommended that “[a]ny previous or future 2020 Census decisions regarding timelines, deadlines and extensions must consider input from career professionals at the Census Bureau.”

In conclusion, the 87 signers from the U.S. business community urged approval of “legislation extending the 2020 Census data reporting deadlines in the next COVID relief package, so that the Census Bureau is not forced to rush remaining enumeration operations and critical data review, processing, and tabulation activities.”

Read the full letter in [PDF](#) or below (with all the signers):

On behalf of America's business community, we urge you to approve legislation as soon as possible to extend the statutory reporting deadlines for the 2020 Census by four months, preferably as part of the next COVID relief package.

While we recognize the urgency of meeting the statutory deadline, a rushed census in the midst of the current public health crisis will harm every state, every business, and every industry in the country relying upon the resulting data.

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely disrupted the 2020 Census. Earlier this year, the pandemic compelled the U.S. Census Bureau to suspend field activities and postpone key operations, including the critical Non-Response Follow Up (NRFU) phase in which census takers visit more than 30 percent of households that have not responded on their own, to collect information in person. Only weeks ago, senior Census Bureau experts said unequivocally that they could not responsibly finish their work in time to complete the NRFU operation and compile, analyze, and disseminate apportionment data by the legally-required December 31, 2020 deadline. Accordingly, the Secretary of Commerce requested that Congress extend the reporting deadlines for apportionment and redistricting data, so that the Census Bureau could complete in-person visits and other special counting operations for the non-household population (including people experiencing homelessness; people living in transitory locations, such as RV parks and motels; and people living in group facilities such as nursing homes and college dorms) and deliver reliable apportionment and redistricting data to the Congress and states.

The business community worries that rushing to complete the census prematurely will drastically undermine the quality of the data that we rely upon so dearly. Currently, there are low response areas in every region and state. This includes not just urban centers, but also outlying rural areas. Self-response rates in rural areas are particularly anemic, presenting the possibility of the biggest undercount of rural America in modern times. A rushed census could lead to a potentially drastic reduction in political representation, government funding, and, from the business community perspective, private sector investment in such communities.

If the remaining counting operations are not conducted efficiently, communities most in need of resources and sound decision-making to improve quality of life and standards of living will be inadequately covered for the next decade. Accurate data from the 2020 Census is critical to informing decision-making and resource/investment allocation in both the private and public sectors. With every other survey in the U.S. built on the population totals from the decennial count, the severe trickle-down impact of an inaccurate 2020 Census would last for a whole decade. That includes impact on the American Community Survey (ACS) and the Economic Census, two other Census Bureau programs upon which the U.S. business community more directly depends. The population and demographic data from these surveys are vital to businesses across America to promote economic development, identify potential customers and create jobs.

Any previous or future 2020 Census decisions regarding timelines, deadlines and extensions must consider input from career professionals at the Census Bureau. Congress has a constitutional responsibility to ensure that the enumeration is conducted responsibly and delivers reliable data about our nation's changing socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. The stakes are high: an undercount of rural and remote communities, young children, low-income people, immigrants,

American Indians and others; congressional representation; and the annual allocation of \$1.5 trillion in federal funding to states and localities.¹

The U.S. business community urges Congress to approve legislation extending the 2020 Census data reporting deadlines in the next COVID relief package, so that the Census Bureau is not forced to rush remaining enumeration operations and critical data review, processing, and tabulation activities.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. An unreliable 2020 Census will be catastrophic for businesses in all sectors and the American economy for many years to come.

Sincerely,

- Advertising Research Foundation (ARF)
- Air Conditioning Contractors of America (ACCA)
- American Advertising Federation (AAF)
- American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA)
- American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC)
- American Institute of Architects (AIA)
- American Road & Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA)
- Asian Business Association
- Associated General Contractors of America (AGC)
- Association of National Advertisers (ANA)
- Association of Public Data Users (APDU)
- Auto Care Association
- Coin Laundry Association
- Consumer Data Industry Association (CDIA)
- Consumer Technology Association (CTA)
- Council for Community and Economic Research
- data.world
- Data Coalition
- ESOMAR
- Household & Commercial Products Association (HCPA)
- Information Technology Industry Council (ITI)
- Insights Association
- Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB)
- International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC)
- International Franchise Association (IFA)
- Mortgage Bankers Association (MBA)
- National Apartment Association (NAA)
- National Association for Business Economics (NABE)
- National Association of Broadcasters (NAB)
- National Association of Home Builders (NAHB)

¹ "New Report Says \$1.5 Trillion in Federal Funding to States and Localities Annually Depends Upon Good Census Count." Nov. 18, 2019. <https://censusproject.files.wordpress.com/2019/11/counting-for-dollars-press-release-11.18.2019.pdf>

- National Association of REALTORS®
- National Beer Wholesalers Association
- National Multifamily Housing Council (NMHC)
- National Retail Federation (NRF)
- Network Advertising Initiative (NAI)
- Ready Nation
- Small Business for America's Future
- Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)
- U.S. Apple Association

[Companies]

- AECOM
- Allen & Hoshall
- Claritas
- Fourth Economy
- Gorman & Company
- Grant Thornton Public Sector
- LivHOME Inc.
- Maxfield Research and Consulting LLC
- Nielsen
- SWBC Mortgage Corporation

[State/local chambers of commerce]

- Allen Fairview Chamber of Commerce (TX)
- Asian Chamber of Texas
- Bay Area Council (CA)
- California Chamber of Commerce
- Cincinnati Compass (OH)
- Collin County Business Alliance (TX)
- Denver Metro Chamber (CO)
- Einstein's Alley (NJ)
- Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce (AR)
- Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce (TX)
- Frisco Chamber of Commerce (TX)
- Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Grand Prairie Chamber of Commerce (TX)
- Granbury Chamber of Commerce (TX)
- Grapevine Chamber of Commerce (TX)
- Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce (MA)
- Greater Des Moines Partnership (IA)
- Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce (MO)
- Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce (TX)
- Haitian American Chamber of Commerce of Florida

- Hispanic Chamber Cincinnati USA (OH)
- Irving-Las Colinas Chamber of Commerce (TX)
- Marshall County Chamber of Commerce (OK)
- Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce (MN)
- Minnesota Chamber of Commerce
- Minnesota Hmong Chamber of Commerce
- North Carolina Business Council
- North Texas Commission
- North Texas LGBT Chamber of Commerce
- Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce
- Rowlett Chamber of Commerce (TX)
- Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce (MN)
- San Antonio Chamber of Commerce (TX)
- Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce (WA)
- Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce (SC)
- Texas Association of Manufacturers
- Texas Business Leadership Council
- West Virginia Chamber of Commerce