



The Honorable Ron Johnson
Chairman, Senate Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Carolyn Maloney
Chairwoman, House Committee on Oversight and
Reform
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gary Peters
Ranking Member, Senate Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs Committee

The Honorable Jim Jordan
Ranking Member, House Committee on Oversight
and Reform

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations
Committee

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chair, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce
Justice Science and Related Agencies

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations on
Commerce Justice Science and Related Agencies

Dear Chairs Johnson, Maloney, Shelby, Moran and Ranking Members Peters, Jordan Leahy, and Shaheen:

CC: House Appropriations Committee

The League of Women Voters and Common Cause write to urge Congress to adopt the Census Bureau's recommendation to extend statutory reporting deadlines for apportionment and redistricting in the next COVID relief bill and allocate at least \$400 million to address continued 2020 Census challenges brought about by the coronavirus pandemic. We must ensure a full and complete count of all communities in the country and not rush 2020 Census operations, when the most difficult work lies ahead. In the face of political & partisan jockeying, the Census must continue to adhere to its mission that everyone is counted once, only once, and in the right place. All people who call America home have an equal opportunity to be counted in the 2020 Census. Congress must extend the deadlines to ensure that the census, which is the bedrock of our democracy, is protected.

[Common Cause](#) is a nonpartisan organization that works to serve its 1.2 million members to ensure that every voice counts and that our government is of, by, and for the people. Common Cause's expertise on census issues is enhanced by our state staff that serve on Statewide Complete Count Committees in six states, including Colorado, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island, as well as local complete count committees throughout the country.

[League of Women Voters](#) is a nonpartisan organization that was founded nearly 100 years ago in 1920 by women who understood the importance of securing voting rights for women. With its 764 local affiliates who reside in every congressional district in the country, the League has worked in coalition to share information on how everyone can get counted, worked in Complete Count Committees to share out information about low-reporting areas, and communicated where additional support is needed.

The Census is the bedrock of our democracy, and we cannot afford to politicize the count. For the last 3 years, multiple partisan attempts have been made to undermine a complete and accurate census count -- most notably, the unsuccessful ploy to add a citizenship question that was blocked by the U.S. Supreme Court. This was followed by an [executive order](#) to collect block-level citizenship data from administrative sources, the addition of two political appointees to the bureau, and most recently, the President's July 21st [memorandum](#) to the Department of Commerce to exclude undocumented immigrants from reapportionment and a sudden about-faced move to shorten the period for enumeration. Each of these maneuvers were designed to exclude populations from the Census. We urge the Census Bureau to uphold its constitutional and legal mandate to count all persons living in the U.S., and to resist efforts to manipulate the Census for partisan and racial advantage.

The Administration's actions take us down a dangerous, but familiar path. The three-fifths compromise was into the U.S. Constitution to mandate that slaves, also not then considered citizens, be counted, but only as three-fifths of a human being for the sole reason of it being politically advantageous. Over 200 years later, This Administration proposes to turn back the clock on our country's civil rights movement, and erase the right to fair representation for partisan and racial advantage in congressional apportionment.

Congress must save the census. The Census should not be weaponized for partisan or racial advantage. Too much is at stake here. If communities continue to fear filling out their census form, towns and cities will not receive funding to support hospitals, schools and fire trucks, children experiencing poverty will go hungry, and necessary vaccines will not be delivered. Common Cause and the League of Women Voters urge Congress to do the following to save the census:

1. Support the Census Bureau's full count of every person until October 31, 2020;
2. Allocate at least \$400 million to address continued 2020 Census challenges brought about by the coronavirus pandemic;
3. Ensure Census Bureau funds are only being used to compile critical data products, as determined by Census professionals not partisan interests;
4. Encourage the Census Bureau to protect the public with a proactive COVID-19 plan including testing and temperature checks for all staff, air filtration in census offices, and providing respondents with masks;
5. Encourage the Census Bureau to increase advertising in immigrant and other undercounted communities;
6. Support efforts to increase transparency & provide stakeholders with Non-Response Follow-Up completion rates. This includes data for self-response and Non-Response Follow-up rates, staffing, group quarters, media buys, call center usage and caller needs.

To ensure a complete census, Congress must prioritize extending the deadlines for Congressional apportionment and redistricting in the next COVID relief bill and allocate at least \$400 million to address continued 2020 Census challenges brought about by the coronavirus pandemic. Census operations must continue in a manner that facilitates a fair and accurate count, without cutting corners that inevitably will lead to a significant undercount.

The Census Bureau has predicted that it will need \$1.5 billion of its \$2 billion emergency budget to support COVID-19 related activities, leaving the Bureau with only \$500 million in contingency funds. In these unprecedented times, it is extremely likely that the Census Bureau will need to exceed the current emergency budget to assure an accurate count in historically hard to count communities and communities acutely hit by the COVID-19 crisis. Again, Congress must act to replenish the contingency fund and extend the deadlines for Congressional apportionment.

Thank you for protecting the health of our democracy, while simultaneously ensuring public health for all Americans. If you have any questions about the recommendations in this letter please contact Jessica Jones of the League of Women Voters of the United States, jjones@lwg.org or Keshia Morris Desir at Common Cause, kmorris@commoncause.org.

Sincerely,

Karen Hobert Flynn
President
Common Cause

Virginia Kase
Chief Executive Officer
League of Women Voters