



Statement for the League of Women Voters of the United States

US Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies May 21, 2026

The League of Women Voters (LWV) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony regarding FY27 appropriations for the US Census Bureau.

LWV is a 106-year-old nonpartisan nonprofit committed to ensuring that everyone is represented in our democracy. We are a grassroots organization comprising over 1 million members and supporters in all 50 states and the District of Columbia across more than 800 local and state Leagues. The League focuses on advocacy, education, litigation, and organizing to advance our mission of empowering voters and defending democracy. We base our work on policy positions developed from multi-year studies and derived through consensus among League membership, ensuring our advocacy reflects best practices and a nationwide perspective. Ensuring a fair, accurate, and fully funded census is core to this mission, and occasions our testimony to this subcommittee.

While the Administration's budget request of \$2.011 billion for the Census Bureau is a necessary starting point, we find that it is still insufficient to meet the scale and complexity of the Bureau's responsibilities. Furthermore, we find that the House's \$1.49 billion in appropriations is even more insufficient for the Bureau and cuts the President's budget recommendation by more than \$500 million, nearly 25%. **The League urges Congress to appropriate at least \$2.1 billion in FY 27 funding** to ensure the Census Bureau can carry out its constitutional mandate and critical data collection programs effectively, transparently, and equitably.

The League's history of supporting the census includes public education, community engagement, and offering feedback on proposals to improve the census and the Census Bureau's operations. Historically, the League has also been a decades-long partner to the Census Bureau, helping educate and turn out the public during the decennial count. Recently, the League offered public comment on the Department of Commerce's proposed 2026 Operational Test in Support of the 2030 Census. The Bureau has since significantly curtailed the scope of the test, including by eliminating testing of certain response methods, limiting the internet self-response (ISR) to English, and cutting out four of the six original test sites, including on tribal and rural lands. With changes like this already compromising the quality of the census, Congress should ensure adequate funding to minimize further hurdles to census operations.

Additionally, the census has a history of underinvestment, with the 2020 Census as a primary example, according to an analysis conducted by The Census Project. Inadequate funding for the 2020 Census resulted in the cancellation of every planned test in rural areas and on tribal lands, including dress rehearsal test sites in 2018. This resulted in a 5.64% undercount on American Indian reservations and a net undercount of 2.58 % in primarily rural areas. These significant



undercounts can be mitigated by ensuring the Census Bureau receives adequate consistent funding throughout the decade leading up to 2030.

The funding for FY 2027 is especially critical for the 2030 Census, as this is when final testing of census operations and methods will happen and when the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) operation is set to begin. Critically, the LUCA operation allows tribal, state, and local governments to submit address lists and maps to the Census Bureau, thereby improving nationwide coverage and reducing costs associated with address canvassing. Congress can help support the LUCA operation by ensuring that the Geographic Support Program is funded an additional \$20 million over the FY26 funding levels.

Each decennial census requires a decade to prepare and cannot afford underfunding. With \$2.8 trillion in annual federal funding allocations at stake — allocations dependent on accurate census data — it is critical that the Senate funds the Census Bureau the additional \$99.5 million more than the Administration's budget request and \$621 million more than the House's \$1.49 billion. This additional funding will ensure that the Census Bureau has the requisite funds to continue its preparations for and execution of a fair and accurate census. We therefore respectfully urge the Committee to recommend \$2.1 billion in FY 27 appropriations to the Census Bureau so that it can continue its operations in this critical year of planning for the 2030 Census.

As a nonpartisan organization, the League of Women Voters is proud of its decades-long partnership with the Census Bureau, both as a get-out-the-count partner and as a stakeholder in the planning process. The League thanks you for your consideration of our testimony on FY27 appropriations, and we look forward to continued engagement to ensure a successful 2030 Census. If you have any questions, please contact Kristen Kern at kkern@lww.org.