
TALKING POINTS: Census Citizenship Question

On the evening of March 26, 2018, Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross announced that he had directed the Census Bureau to add an untested and unnecessary question to the 2020 Census form, which would ask the citizenship status of every person in America. The following talking points are designed to help you communicate why this was a bad decision and why it must be corrected.

- **This alarming decision is bad for the census, bad for our communities, and bad for America.**
 - Conducting a census with major untested elements will force the Census Bureau to conduct the count with a blindfold on. The Census Bureau conducted careful, costly research and testing over the last eight years to develop the census questions. The addition of this new and controversial question invalidates that research and risks jeopardizing the success of the count.
 - The unwise addition of this citizenship question to the form will cause participation in the upcoming census to plummet. Asking every household and every person in the country about their citizenship status in the current political environment – when there is no programmatic basis or need to do so – will cause panic and will cause hundreds of thousands of people in our communities to avoid the census for fear of being targeted by this administration.
 - This question is unnecessarily intrusive and will raise concerns in all households –native- and foreign-born, citizen and non-citizen – about the confidentiality of their personal information and how government authorities may use that information.
- **Getting the 2020 Census right is important for all American communities – particularly those most likely to be undercounted. This politically driven citizenship question compromises the Census Bureau’s constitutional responsibility to conduct a fair and accurate count of every person living in the United States.**
 - Everyone relies on census data. Census data are the basis for fair political representation. Local community leaders use this data to make decisions about allocating resources for community needs like education, assistance for veterans, hospitals, and transportation. Businesses and entrepreneurs use census data to make critical decisions about where to locate plants and stores, hiring, and customer needs.
 - Secretary Ross’ rationale for adding an untested citizenship question so late in

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the process is a disservice to the integrity and scientific stature of the Census Bureau, tarnishing one of the world's most respected statistical agencies. Millions of people rely on the Census Bureau to provide accurate, comprehensive data about our nation that impact us all – and there are no do-overs.

- The costs of adding an untested question this late in the process to taxpayers is significant. According to the Census Bureau, every one percent decrease in the self- response rate will increase the cost of the count by \$55 million. A five percent drop in self response would add an additional, unplanned \$275 million to the census.
- **We are joining forces with business leaders, elected officials of all parties, our coalition of more than 200 organizations, as well as grassroots and civic activists, to defend our census, our democracy, and our nation.**
 - Litigation has already been filed to challenge the decision. These lawsuits, filed by state officials and advocates, include a lawsuit filed by the state of California,; a multi-state lawsuit led by the state of New York, on behalf of 18 state attorneys general, seven cities, and the bipartisan U.S Conference of Mayors; a suit filed by a group representing seven residents of Maryland and Arizona; and a suit filed on behalf of the city of San Jose, California and Black Alliance for Just Immigration. More lawsuits are expected.
 - We've already seen statements of outrage from members of Congress. Now Congress to turn their outrage to action. Congress must fix this decision. The stakes are too high to allow this question to derail the count.
 - No one in the mainstream wanted Ross to do this. The bipartisan, mainstream alarm and opposition to adding a citizenship question at the last minute was vast, including [60 members of Congress](#), [161 Democratic and Republican mayors](#); two former Commerce Secretaries and six former Census directors who served in Republican and Democratic administrations; 19 attorneys general; the scientific and statistical community; and several dozen business leaders from across the country.
 - There is still time to fix this. The Census Bureau has time before it must finalize the online and paper form for the census questionnaire. The public comments process that begins with the notice published in the Federal Register this summer will allow stakeholders and experts who oppose addition of a citizenship question to the 2020 Census to establish a strong, clear public record and convey the broad public opposition to this misguided decision.