

CAPITOL OFFICE  
1226 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-0534  
PHONE: (202) 225-6235  
FAX: (202) 225-2202

DISTRICT OFFICE  
350 SOUTH BIXEL STREET, SUITE 120  
LOS ANGELES, CA 90017  
PHONE: (213) 481-1425  
FAX: (213) 481-1427

gomez.house.gov



COMMITTEE ON  
OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
INTERIOR, ENERGY, AND ENVIRONMENT

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
WATER, POWER, AND OCEANS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL LANDS

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

JIMMY GOMEZ

34TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

March 28, 2018

The Honorable Trey Gowdy  
Chairman  
House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
2157 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Gowdy:

I write to urge you to hold hearings as soon as possible to address the Department of Commerce's (Department) decision to include a citizenship question in the 2020 Census. As you know, per Committee Rule 6 (a)(1)(A), our Committee has jurisdiction over the Census Bureau (Bureau), and has held multiple hearings to ensure the Bureau's preparations for the 2020 Census are on track to lead to a fair and accurate population count.

The Census is a cornerstone of our democracy. Every 10 years, data collected by the decennial census is used to apportion representatives in Congress; determine how many votes each state will have in the Electoral college; draw state, local, and congressional districts; allocate billions of federal funds to local communities; and make informed business decisions in the private sector. Despite the significant role played by the census, recent actions by the Trump administration threaten to undermine the fairness and accuracy of the 2020 decennial Census.

On March 26, 2018, the Department announced that the 2020 Census will include a question asking the citizenship status of every person in every household in the United States. This action is a serious departure from the Bureau's previous submission to Congress on March 28, 2017, which indicated there would be no changes to the subjects planned for the 2020 Census.<sup>1</sup> Given that the Bureau must meet a statutory deadline of March 31, 2018 – 5 days after the Trump Administration's announcement – to submit its final questionnaire for the 2020 Census to Congress, it is crucial that the Committee exercise oversight in this matter.

In particular, the Department's decision to authorize the citizenship question without testing its effects is curious given its stated rationale for the Office of Management and Budget's rejection

---

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau Subjects Planned for the 2020 Decennial Census Program.  
<https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/2020/operations/planned-subjects-2020-acs.pdf>

of the Bureau-recommended combined race and ethnicity question. The Bureau has not studied or tested the citizenship question on the decennial short form nearly as rigorously as the combined question, and unlike the combined question, has no data to support its assertion that its inclusion will not significantly diminish Census participation nor significantly drive up the lifecycle cost of the 2020 Census. The decision to include an untested question while excluding a well-tested question shown to have positive results reeks of political machinations and thus makes it imperative that the Commerce Secretary and the Under Secretary of Economic Affairs answer Members' questions in a public, open hearing.

The Census occurs only once every ten years, and there are no do-overs. The data is critical to our democracy, and the repercussions of an unfair, inaccurate count are immense. I firmly believe it is the Committee's responsibility to call upon the Commerce Department to explain its recent decisions and answer the pressing questions Members like myself have about these actions.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Jimmy Gomez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

---

Jimmy Gomez  
Member of Congress