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**Civil Rights Organizations and Census Experts Highlight Damaging Consequences of Congress’ Failure to Fund the 2020 Census Appropriately**

**WASHINGTON** – Today, leading civil rights organizations and census experts hosted audio press briefings to discuss critical policy decisions affecting the 2020 Census, including the need for Congress to provide sufficient funding in 2017 and 2018 for rigorous, on-time census planning and preparations.

Recently, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) identified the 2020 Census as a “high risk” federal program. The report highlights concerns about the Census Bureau’s “ability to conduct a cost-effective enumeration” in 2020, citing major innovations that could save money in the long run but require sufficient investment up-front to ensure feasibility, scale, and accuracy.

The essential work of preparing for the next decennial count is entering a critical period; decisions being made this year by Congress and the Trump administration will determine whether the Census Bureau has the resources it needs to do the job well. The U.S. Constitution requires a census every ten years, and Congress is responsible for making sure the enumeration is accurate across all communities.

**A recording of today’s call is available** [**here**](http://civilrightsdocs.info/audio/press-calls/Census-Press-Call-03302017.mp3)**.**

**Wade Henderson, president and CEO, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights:** “Census data are vital to the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of a wide range of civil rights laws and policies, from fair political representation and voting reforms, to equal opportunity and access across all economic and social sectors of society, including housing, education, health care, and the job market. That’s why ensuring a fair and accurate census is a top priority of the civil and human rights coalition … Communities of color, urban and rural low-income households, immigrants, and young children are all at risk of being missed at disproportionately high rates. The health and wellbeing, as well as the political power of all of the diverse communities The Leadership Conference represents, rests on a fair and accurate count.”

**Terri Ann Lowenthal, former Staff Director, House Census and Population Subcommittee, and consultant to The Leadership Conference Education Fund:**

“Congress’ failure over the past few years to pay for rigorous 2020 Census planning, and now the Trump Administration’s insufficient budget request for 2018, will strike at the heart of operations specifically designed to make the census better in historically undercounted communities – such as targeted advertising, language assistance, door-to-door visits in fearful neighborhoods, and special methods in poorer rural areas.” Lowenthal called on Congress to “set aside the Administration’s … disappointing, unrealistic, and too low” 2018 funding proposal for the Census Bureau and to “establish a steady funding ramp-up that keeps 2020 Census planning and preparations on track from here on out.”

**Arturo Vargas, executive director, National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund:**

“The persistent undercount of the nation’s second largest population group is a civil rights issue. … Unless we bring all Latinos out of the shadows and into the light in Census 2020, the Latino community will continue to have disproportionate access to fair political representation and public services. Congress must make the investments necessary today to ensure an accurate and cost-efficient count of Latinos tomorrow.  Anything less would mean a failed Census 2020.”

**John C. Yang, president and executive director, Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC:**

“As the nation’s only source of comparable geographic, demographic, and socio-economic data for all communities in the country, the ACS is a part of the census and updates the census throughout the decade. As such, it is required by law and must remain so to provide the vital information needed from our communities. …We cannot let Congress make the American Community Survey voluntary and Congress must provide sufficient resources for a steady ramp up in census preparations for the 2020 Census.”

The Leadership Conference Education Fund builds public will for federal policies that promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States. The Education Fund's campaigns empower and mobilize advocates around the country to push for progressive change in the United States. It was founded in 1969 as the education and research arm of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. For more information on The Leadership Conference Education Fund, [www.leadershipconferenceedfund.org](http://www.leadershipconferenceedfund.org/).

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