

California's Citizens Redistricting Commission

"Fair Representation—Democracy At Work!"



721 Capitol Mall, Suite 260 \ Sacramento, CA 95814 | www.WeDrawTheLines.ca.gov

September 9, 2020

Wilbur Ross
Secretary, U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington DC 2030

Steven Dillingham
Director, U.S. Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road
Suitland, MD 20746

Dear Secretary Ross and Director Dillingham,

As the independent and bipartisan commission tasked with re-drawing the boundaries of congressional and state legislative districts in California, we recognize the crucial importance of a fair and accurate Census. We write to urge the U.S. Census Bureau to honor its previously announced 2020 census completion date of October 31, 2020, and to continue operations under the modified timeline as detailed in the April 13, 2020 announcement by your offices.

The work of California's Citizens Redistricting Commission (CRC) will rely heavily on census data to make redistricting decisions. We are concerned that the early end to data collection will impact the quality of the census data, which the CRC will utilize to draw new legislative districts. A premature end to census counting will force the Commission, and similar entities across the country, to rely on potentially inaccurate and incomplete data to guide the redistricting processes, which may result in unavoidable legal challenges. Now, more than ever, the Census Bureau must commit to counting everyone, and to give Census Bureau staff the time necessary to conduct more robust non-response follow up, post-processing and other quality assurance controls. We strongly urge allowing more time to ensure that hard-to-reach communities such as linguistic minorities and rural Americans, who may be disproportionately undercounted by the truncated deadline, are fully counted.

An accurate count of the population serves as the basis for fair political representation. Ensuring an accurate count of the people is a challenging yet crucial endeavor. The effort has been further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has limited the outreach and communication efforts in hard-to-reach communities, including people of color, low-income families, people experiencing homelessness, and immigrant families. Particularly hard-hit and reporting an undercount are California's rural counties, including tribal lands, as well as counties that have seen significant demographic change over the last ten years.

California law requires all residents be counted for redistricting purposes. Our state is home to immigrant and refugee communities from many countries around the world. Reaching these communities and ensuring an accurate count can be difficult. Members of these communities speak numerous languages, and may lack access to the internet. Many may be apprehensive about completing their census forms since this may be their first time participating in a census.

Significant efforts to assist in outreach are underway by cities and privately funded community groups, who relied on the original October 31st deadline to develop their outreach plans. Consequently, we

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believe that it is crucial that the Bureau uphold the original October 31st deadline. This will provide the time needed for the enumeration period for self-response and non-response follow up. We recognize that this may delay our own deadlines for redistricting and may make our own jobs more difficult, but we strongly believe that this is the best option for upholding the confidence and fidelity of the entire process.

The California Citizens Redistricting Commission is one of the few independent and bipartisan commissions in the United States tasked with redistricting. Our fourteen member panel is comprised of five Republicans, five Democrats and four non-party affiliates. Together, we ask that you support our bipartisan efforts by ensuring a fair and accurate count that allows an adequate amount of time for the residents of our state to be counted.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Commissioner Trena Turner, Chair

Commissioner Isra Ahmad (No party affiliation)
Commissioner Linda Akutagawa (No party affiliation)
Commissioner Jane Andersen (Republican)
Commissioner Alicia Fernandez (Republican)
Commissioner Neal Forniciari (Republican)
Commissioner Dr. J. Ray Kennedy (Democrat)
Commissioner Antonio Le Mons (No party affiliation)
Commissioner Dr. Sara Sadhwani (Democrat)
Commissioner Patricia Sinay (Democrat)
Commissioner Derric Taylor (Republican)
Commissioner Pedro Toledo (No party affiliation)
Commissioner Angela Vazquez (Democrat)
Commissioner Russell Yee (Republican)