

Honorable Senator –

As a former census employee who worked over 4 censuses, 1980 – 2010, I know the importance of preparation to complete a thorough and accurate census. It takes approximately 10 years to prepare for a census. This did not happen in 2020.

The Census Bureau's decision in 2012 to close 50% of the regional offices radically changed the Field Regional Office structure and had a devastating impact on the logistics of the census. The Bureau determined that closed offices could be replaced by public internet response, which proved to be an epic failure. To make matters worse, the pandemic dealt a significant blow on the ability to obtain an accurate enumeration of communities through their long-time policy of visiting households/addresses door-to-door. Amid an unprecedented health crisis, people were not answering their doors, or even their phones, if the number or person was unknown to them.

The Census Bureau undertook this radical change of its field structure in 2012, with no testing of the impact to procedures, methodology, training, administrative or technical support and a complete disregard of the effect these changes would have on the total count. The last-minute attempts to reestablish the Partnership Program, (partnership with community non-profits and organizations) was too little too late and only added to the chaos.

2020 resulted in a significant undercount of our Nation's population, especially in traditionally underserved, low-income communities. The Midwest and Northeast have been the most impacted, losing a significant number of congressional seats. Congress relies on accurate census data to make fundamental funding decisions. Change must be made NOW to ensure better, thorough results in 2030!

In closing, key considerations for success in 2030 include

- Immediate reopening of Regional Field Offices – Field Offices are vital for an accurate census.
- More funding put into the Partnership Program – this program has proven effective in obtaining resident trust and response in past census. 2020's last minute efforts to involve local non-profits and community organizations contributed to low response and undercounts. 2030 MUST establish these relationships NOW.
- Resource planning must be immediate and ongoing.

Respectfully,

Jane C. Garcia