



August 2, 2024

House Speaker Mike Johnson
U.S. House of Representatives

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Speaker Johnson and Leader Jeffries,

The U.S. business community is severely concerned by Section 621 of the Fiscal Year 2025 Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) Appropriations bill, which passed the House Appropriations Committee on July 9, 2024. This policy provision would crater response rates to all Census Bureau surveys and result in the decennial census and the American Community Survey (ACS) counting barely a third of the country. It would drastically undermine the quality and availability of census survey data, especially for rural areas and small population groups, and have negative ripple effects across the U.S. economy.

Per Section 621: *“None of the funds in this Act may be used to enforce involuntary compliance, or to inquire more than twice for voluntary compliance with any survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census.”* If adopted, this language would (1) prohibit enforcement of the mandatory response requirement on the decennial headcount and the American Community Survey (ACS), and (2) severely constrict the ability to conduct basic contact and non-response follow-up operations across all Census Bureau surveys.

Section 621 would have an especially devastating impact on the decennial census, which must send way more than just two invitations to just secure self-response. According to data from the

Census Quality Reinforcement Task Force, the 2020 Census had counted only 28% of U.S. households after the first two contacts, as of March 25, 2020, and no state had achieved even 35% coverage. This provision, by cutting off contacts after that point, including non-response follow up operations, would leave as much as two-thirds of the U.S. uncounted in the 2030 Census.

Section 621 would likewise undermine coverage in the ACS and the Current Population Survey, which usually require 2.5 to 3 follow-up contacts. Major business, economic, and demographic surveys that have multiple follow-up contact strategies would be similarly hurt. These caps on contacts with households, businesses, retail purchasers, wholesalers, manufacturers and others will have serious consequences on the reliability and accuracy of the many economic indicators produced by the Census Bureau, which move markets in the U.S. and around the world.

Congress should promote opportunities to secure reliable data by increasing response rates, not decreasing them. This will give American businesses the certainty to plan, attract, and execute future investments. With Section 621 limiting response rates, every other survey in the U.S. built on the population totals from the decennial count and estimates from the ACS will produce inaccurate data and insights. Businesses use census data to promote economic development, identify potential customers, understand audiences and create jobs. The scenario under Section 621 would be disastrous for American business decision-makers and hinder economic competition, development, and growth.

Section 621 would wreak havoc on Census Bureau surveys, and by extension on most every other survey and research study conducted across the country. Therefore, the undersigned members of the U.S. business community urge the removal of this provision as you advance the FY25 CJS Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

American Advertising Federation (AAF)
American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA)
American Planning Association
Associated General Contractors of America (AGC)
Association of National Advertisers (ANA)
Coin Laundry Association
ICSC
Insights Association
Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB)
Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce
National Association of Business Economics (NABE)
National Association of Home Builders (NAHB)
National Association of REALTORS®
National Multifamily Housing Council (NMHC)
Nielsen