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Biden and Raimondo Must Assure Detroit, Nation Never Have Census Count Diminish Minorities Again

by Robert Weiner and Charlyn Chu

The decennial census is the nation's most important headcount, determining congressional representation and the equitable distribution of federal funding, yet former President Donald Trump managed to [tamper](#) with it without consequence.

As a result, Detroit and other major cities were [undercounted](#), and may receive less funding — a new report shows that over [\\$2.8 trillion](#) in federal funding was guided by Census data in 2021.

Just as Trump and his Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross interfered by prematurely stopping the count, President Joe Biden and Secretary Gina Raimondo must take decisive action to depoliticize the census and prevent future abuses. But Biden can and must go a step further — he should better incorporate the [Count Question Resolution \(CQR\) program](#). He should request that the Bureau release their reasoning and override rejections.

When the Trump administration pushed for a citizenship question on the 2020 census, Ross [misled](#) Congress on their motive: to prevent undocumented immigrants and minorities from being counted.

“It is appalling that the Trump Administration subjected an undertaking as important as the decennial census to brazen political manipulation,” [said](#) Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney, D-NY. Despite the question being [knocked down](#) by the Supreme Court, the damage was already done.

While the Court blocked the citizenship question, it did permit Trump to shorten the Census without any justification. Bureau experts repeatedly insisted [more time was needed](#) for an accurate count, as poor, minority areas traditionally wait until later dates to report.

Detroit is [considered a hard-to-count city](#) because of its vacant houses, poor internet access and poverty rates. Door-knocking efforts and specialized ways of reaching out to these neighborhoods were cut short. Now, the Census is [refusing](#) to adjust Detroit’s population estimates.

Despite Ross [promising](#) to deliver an accurate count, post-enumeration surveys reveal the 2020 census performed poorly across many quality measures compared to the previous two censuses. [Pew Research](#) states more than three million Hispanics were missed in 2020, four times the number missed in 2010. There was a 3.3% net undercount of the Black population, a 1.2% increase from 2010.

State population numbers have already been used for redistricting and electoral college votes, with Michigan losing yet another House seat. However, governmental units were able to challenge population counts until June 30, 2023, through the CQR [program](#).

Unfortunately, the program is far from a true solution. Not all case submissions result in proper adjustments, and those living in undercounted communities could lose funding for better housing, education, and other assistance. Many major cities filed challenges but were unsuccessful. Even worse was the fact that the Census provided little info on its methodology, state officials [said](#).

The Census rejected Detroit's challenge that they were [shortchanged](#) by 8% of their occupied homes in 10 neighborhoods. Mayor Mike Duggan [argued](#) that Detroit is growing despite Census results indicating a population decline, calling the Census a "clown show."

To ensure these mistakes are corrected in the 2030 Census and beyond, Biden must issue an executive order, declaring that a census count should never be stopped before it is scheduled to end. The rules cannot be changed in the middle of the game.

And if current Secretary of Commerce, Gina Raimondo, cares about upholding democracy, she must address [concerns](#) voiced by congressional members on fixing 2020 census inaccuracies.

Biden should also ask for an additional review of rejected challenges. The Census must issue recounts of housing units, group homes and prisons, as many of these communities have claimed these areas — primarily filled with people of color — were overlooked. In Detroit, 30,000 people may be at stake according to [differences](#) between the 2020 count and 2019 population estimates.

The Constitution explicitly states apportionment is based on “counting the whole number of persons in each State.” If voting preferences of demographic groups are not kept out of the Census, then it merely becomes another avenue for the weaponization of political power, a way to manipulate and exploit numbers that matter — numbers that decide where supermarkets, schools, and hospitals are built.

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