



NEWS RELEASE

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New Amendment Could Put Census 2020 in Greater Jeopardy

Comstock amendment would strip 30 million dollars from an underfunded U.S. Census Bureau that has already had to eliminate vital testing activities in advance of Census 2020

WASHINGTON, D.C. –The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund today announced its opposition to Comstock Amendment #85 to H.R. 3354, the “Make America Secure and Prosperous Appropriations Act, 2018,” which would strip critical funding for the 2020 Census by shifting 30 million dollars from the U.S. Census Bureau to the Commerce Department’s Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) program.

“While we understand the importance of the Manufacturing Extension Partnership program in many communities, the simple fact is that the Census Bureau cannot afford to receive even less funding than what is currently proposed by Congress if we want a full and accurate count in Census 2020,” stated Arturo Vargas, National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund executive director. “The staff of the U.S. Census Bureau are doing their best to work toward a sound enumeration in 2020, but current funding levels have essentially already left the agency without the capacity it needs to prepare for the federal government’s largest civilian mobilization in years.”

Due to current levels of funding and other factors, the Census Bureau was forced to announce a number of significant changes to Census 2020 testing, operations and procedures in July that place its success in jeopardy. Several of these changes will have a significant impact on capturing a full count of the Latino community, including the following:

- **Counting more than 12 million hard-to-count households will be even more difficult:** The Census Bureau will use a different approach for counting residents in as many as 12 million housing units, which are located in remote or rural areas, including homes which do not have traditional “city-style” addresses. The Bureau had initially planned to count these residents through an approach where an enumerator would attempt to interview a resident of the household, rather than mailing materials to the household. Under the newly-announced approach, the enumerator will leave behind a packet of Census materials at the household. Many of the areas where the Bureau will adopt this approach include communities with significant Latino populations in the Southwest, Puerto Rico, and rural Northwest, Northeast and Southeast.
- **Census 2020 testing to no longer include site with sizable Latino rural population:** The Census Bureau is eliminating the testing of crucial components of its 2018 End-to-End Test (also known as the “dress rehearsal”) at two sites, one of which has a significant Latino rural population (Pierce County, WA). The dress rehearsal will no longer provide a “real world” opportunity to assess some of the most significant

changes the Bureau hopes to implement in Census 2020, including the internet response option, in rural areas which may lack internet connections. The Bureau will also lose the opportunity to test how to effectively use field staff to reach people who do not initially respond to the Census in such areas, including Latinos who may live in remote communities with non-traditional housing.

- **Communications and outreach strategies will not be tested in the field:** An assessment of the Census Bureau's communications and partnership programs will not be conducted in any site during the "dress rehearsal." The partnership program has been particularly critical for Latino participation in the Census, because it brings national and local government together with community leaders, non-profit organizations and businesses for Census outreach and education.

"With a hostile political environment and the Trump Administration's aggressive immigration enforcement policies, there has been an enormous erosion in the trust and confidence of Latino families to have contact with federal agencies. This makes the work of the U.S. Census Bureau and organizations like NALEO Educational Fund and our partners more critical than ever if we hope to effectively reach the community and ensure that every Latino is counted in Census 2020," concluded Vargas.

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About NALEO Educational Fund

NALEO Educational Fund is the nation's leading non-partisan, non-profit organization that facilitates the full participation of Latinos in the American political process, from citizenship to public service.