



# WEST VIRGINIANS RELY UPON ACCURATE CENSUS DATA

A NALEO CAMPAIGN

**ACCURATE CENSUS DATA ARE KEY** for federal funding allocations to state and localities. Federal resources are divided up between jurisdictions according to what Census data tell us about various communities' demographic characteristics, needs, and assets. In order for West Virginia to receive its fair share, the Census Bureau must master the difficult task of accurately counting the state's population.

Historically, certain hard-to-reach populations are more difficult to count than others. West Virginia is home to disproportionate shares of populations that are most frequently undercounted, including people with lower incomes and people living in rural areas. For example, West Virginia's poverty rate almost 5% higher than the national average.



## Federal Census-directed programs that are particularly important to West Virginians include:

### Highway Planning and Construction

West Virginia's mountainous terrain and rural spaces mean it has a significant number of miles of road to maintain that are crucial to ensuring residents' access to economic and social opportunity. In FY17, thanks to Census data, West Virginia received more than \$449 million in funding authorized by the 2015 Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, the largest portion of it designated for maintenance of national highways and construction and repair of bridges and other highway facilities.

### Head Start

West Virginia is home to many children who face educational challenges related to their families' lower incomes. These young people benefit from access to Head Start classes, and West Virginia runs a sizeable program: because of Census data, the state received more than \$66 million from the federal government to support this effort in FY16.

### Low Income Home Energy Assistance

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program provides vital support to families struggling to pay for heating and cooling throughout the year. Thanks to Census data, over FY2014-16, West Virginia received over \$84 million in federal funding for this program, serving 81,510 households in FY14.

**When it is adequately funded, the Census Bureau produces highly accurate, detailed data that enable us to direct a total of over \$6.7 billion to the West Virginia communities where those resources are most needed.**

But if the Census Bureau's hands are tied by declining appropriations or limitations that prevent it from conducting a sound decennial enumeration and accurate surveys, the quality of Census data similarly will decline, and many fewer West Virginians will benefit from these and many other Census-directed federal programs.

Congress must adequately fund the Census Bureau by providing it with no less than \$8 billion for the decennial Census in FY20. It is critical that Congress secure this funding by the start of the fiscal year, when address canvassing, advertising, and other key activities will already be underway. Any funding delay or uncertainty would disrupt the conduct of the survey and imperil the accuracy of Census data for a decade to come.