



NEWS RELEASE

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NALEO Educational Fund Calls on Congress to Step in on Census 2020

Strong oversight by Congress is paramount to salvaging the 2020 Census

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund today released a statement from CEO Arturo Vargas on the Census Bureau’s request for a 120-day statutory relief of critical legislative deadlines amid the coronavirus (COVID-19) public health crisis:

“In light of the recent developments from the Census Bureau, it has become clear that salvaging the 2020 Census will require Congress to step up its oversight role and act swiftly alongside the Bureau to protect the enumeration process moving forward.

“As the census is a constitutionally mandated decennial count, there is only so much the Bureau can do on its own to maintain the integrity of the process amid a national crisis like the one we are experiencing with COVID-19. Congress has the authority and obligation to work with the Bureau in taking a close look at all steps required to ensure an accurate count of all residents in the United States.

“We realize the current challenges before the Bureau. We also understand the risks our community faced of an undercount before the COVID-19 pandemic – from significant changes to Census 2020 operations, to a lack of funding and oversight from Congress during the critical planning years leading up to 2020, to what our [research](#) revealed as a lingering chilling effect from the Trump Administration’s failed attempt to add a citizenship question. The totality of the situation we now find ourselves in demands that our government rises to the occasion with transparent, steady, and deliberate action to salvage the 2020 Census.

“As households began receiving invitations on March 12, our organization has been steadfast in promoting Latino self-response online, by phone, or by mail. And as [paper forms](#) are arriving now, we have launched a [Latino Census Week of Action](#) in partnership with our friends at Comcast NBCUniversal Telemundo, some of Broadway’s top Latino performers, and many of our Latino census partners to aggressively push self-response via mail. A strong self-response rate reduces the number of households the Census Bureau must pursue to obtain census data during the Non-Response Follow Up (NRFU) period.

“While high self-response rates can help reduce the workload for NRFU, this operation is the most vital element for completing the census and achieving a 100 percent count of Latinos and other populations. We will be scrutinizing the Census Bureau’s NRFU plans and operations when they resume, ensuring that they are sufficiently robust and aggressive in reaching all

households that did not self-respond in the initial phase of the census. An incomplete or inadequate NRFU operation is not an option.

“NALEO Educational Fund remains committed to our partnership with the Census Bureau during these extraordinary times. As the Latino population continues to grow and flourish, it is essential that the census reflects this reality both for the sake of our community’s future and the overall integrity of the census. Latinos represent the second-largest population group in the country. An undercount of Latinos would mean a failed census. This census must, at a minimum, match the count of our community from the 2010 Census, with better accuracy in 2020, capturing our growth and diversity correctly. Anything less would be unacceptable.

“The Census Bureau’s request for deadline extensions is a sobering reminder of the importance of completing the census in a timely manner without sacrificing accuracy. Time is not on our side. The further enumeration operations take place from April 1, the less accurate and complete the count becomes. Additionally, a 120-day statutorily-mandated deadline relief for delivering apportionment counts and redistricting data does not give license to the states to proceed with redistricting in a manner that compromises constitutional and Voting Rights Act protections for voters or public participation and input in the process.

“The Constitution places the responsibility for carrying out the decennial census squarely in the hands of Congress. In light of this obligation, it is time for Congress to take a strong leadership and oversight role if Census 2020 is to be saved.”

Residents can self-respond to the census online at <https://my2020census.gov/> or over the phone in English by dialing 844-330-2020 or in Spanish at 844-468-2020. Paper census forms are arriving in the mail from April 8-16, which can be returned via mail once completed.

Individuals with questions about the census can call NALEO Educational Fund’s toll-free national census bilingual hotline at 877-EL-CENSO (877-352-3676) – Monday-Friday from 8:30 a.m.– 8:30 p.m. ET to get additional information.

Partners can stay up to date on tools to continue to get out the count in Latino communities by visiting www.hagasecontar.org/resources, texting CENSUS to 97779, or by subscribing to our email list [here](#).

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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.