

# The Mounting Cost Of Inaction: *The Census*

COVID-19 On July 7, 2020

U.S. Infections – 2,932,596  
U.S. Deaths – 130,133

U.S. Unemployment – 11.1 Percent  
Since House Passed Heroes Act – 54 Days

## What is the Census?

Mandated in Article I, Section 2 of the Constitution, the Census is a decennial count of our country's population used to determine Congressional apportionment and how \$1.5 trillion in federal spending is allocated.

## Census Fun Fact

Before the U.S. Census in 1790, censuses were used primarily to tax or conscript people into military service. The original purpose of the U.S. Census was to determine representation in Congress, making it a tool of political empowerment for the governed over their government.

## What's the Problem?

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly delayed the Census. In March, the Census temporarily suspended in person interviews and formally announced a three-month delay of field operations in May. These delays are estimated to cost more than \$800 million in additional salary for Area Census Office staff, advertising to support self-response efforts, and extending contracts and office leases. This is on top of an estimated \$700 million to increase enumeration staff, provide PPE, and support paid sick leave. While Congress provided a \$2 billion reserve to mitigate unforeseen costs, the pandemic is likely to consume 75 percent these funds. Without additional funding the Census has only a limited reserve in its final six months, which includes major field operations that begin in August. If there are future COVID-19 impacts, natural disasters, or cybersecurity issues, the Census could be cash strapped, which could endanger the accuracy of the Census and have consequences on funding for communities and Congressional apportionment over the next decade.

## What Can We Do?

The House-passed Heroes Act, which has languished in Leader McConnell's "legislative grave yard," added an additional \$400 million for the Census to mitigate the cost of the field operation delay. Senate Republicans need to abandon their "wait-and-see" approach and Congress must provide the resources to support the Census.

## Where Can I Read More?

[Census Door Knockers Starting in 6 States Later This Month](#)

[The US Government Has Always Undercounted Native Americans. But COVID-19 Could Make the 2020 Census a Disaster.](#)