

Testimony: House Appropriations Committee Article I Funding for the 2020 Census for Secretary of State, 2020-2021

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The Center for Public Policy Priorities is an independent organization that uses data and analysis to advocate for policy solutions enabling all Texans to reach their full potential. We envision a Texas where everyone is healthy, well educated, and financially secure. To help reach this vision, the state should invest and commit to a robust 2020 Census plan to ensure every Texan is counted.

The Census is a constitutionally mandated count of the nation's residents. The 2020 Census affects our representation in Congress and the redrawing of state legislative districts; our federal funding for health care, housing, education, and transportation; and private-sector investments in our economy and infrastructure. George Washington University researchers estimate that a 1 percent undercount could cause a minimum **\$300 million federal funding loss for Texas per year** for the next 10 years. This lost federal support (for health care, foster care, and child care) would require state taxes to fill in the funding gaps for the next decade.

Texas Governors William Clements and George Bush issued executive orders to promote Census outreach by establishing State Complete Count Committees or directing specific agencies such as the Secretary of State's office to develop Census information, including a Texas 2000 Census website. Twenty-four states have already committed to investing in an accurate count. For Texas not to fall behind, we must commit to a robust 2020 Census statewide plan with state funding for outreach.

Statewide Complete Count Committees do not have to involve expensive, multifaceted campaigns. Georgia, a politically conservative state with 10.5 million residents, allocated a one-time amount of \$2.25 million (20 cents per person) towards Census outreach. These funds were used to develop a website to educate residents and prepare them for the 2020 Census, and to support local communities' Census outreach efforts. The state incorporated already prepared documents from the Census Bureau on its own site, making it a straightforward and valuable resource in spreading 2020 Census information.

Like Texas, Georgia has "hard to count" communities. These are communities that have low response rates to the Census and require targeted outreach to make sure residents are counted. In 2010, significant undercounts for Texas occurred in rural communities, large metropolitan areas, college towns, and communities along the Mexico border. Funding from the state will make it possible for these communities to have a targeted outreach effort and likely reduce an undercount.

We recommend that the House budget allocate at least \$6 million for an accurate census count across Texas. We believe the Secretary of State's office is the best agency to implement a 2020 Census outreach plan and to distribute state funds to local communities to increase participation and awareness of the 2020 Census. An incomplete, inaccurate 2020 Census would result in a lost decade of federal resources Texans will pay into, and from which they should benefit. It is in the best interest of our great state to have a complete count.

The Center for Public Policy Priorities is an independent public policy organization that uses research, analysis and advocacy to promote solutions that enable Texans of all backgrounds to reach their full potential. Learn more at CPPP.org.