

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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November 13, 2017

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

I am writing to request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) examine the U.S. Census Bureau's preparations to enumerate the "hard to count" populations as part of the 2020 Decennial Census.

The Bureau has begun its last major field test—the 2018 End-to-End Test, which is essentially the "dress rehearsal" for the 2020 Census—yet, the Bureau has not released any plans for addressing historical differences in its undercount across socio-demographic groups. In particular, some groups have proven more difficult to enumerate using the Bureau's historical paper-based mail-in approach, and may remain difficult to count accurately with the Bureau's 2020 innovations. These groups likely include racial and ethnic minorities, renters, persons who do not speak English fluently, homeless persons, undocumented immigrants, young mobile persons, young children, LGBTQ persons, and those persons who distrust the government.

I want to ensure that the Bureau's efforts are on track for a cost effective, credible, and high quality 2020 Census. Therefore, I ask that GAO evaluate the Bureau's planning for enumerating hard-to-count populations, including answering questions such as:

1. What socio-demographic groups comprise the "hard to count", and why?
2. What were the lessons learned from the Bureau's prior efforts to count the "hard to count"?
3. To what extent is the Bureau's current preparation effort for the 2020 Census leveraging the lessons learned from prior efforts, including or addressing any prior recommendations made by GAO, National Academy of Sciences, Department of Commerce advisory bodies, or the Bureau's own evaluations and experiments on counting the "hard to count"?

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4. What is the status of the Bureau's efforts to enumerate the "hard to count"?
5. What else should be done to ensure a complete and accurate Census, and ensure an accurate enumeration of the "hard to count"?

I look forward to working with your staff and receiving regular updates on this work. Please contact Katie Teleky of my staff at (202)-225-5051 with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Elijah E. Cummings

Ranking Member

Committee on Oversight and
Government Reform