



NEWS RELEASE

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NALEO Educational Fund Vows to Fight Against Addition of Citizenship Question to 2020 Census

*Organization will work alongside partners to overturn decision that threatens
a full and accurate count of Latino community and nation*

Washington, D.C. – The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund today released a statement from Executive Director Arturo Vargas following the U.S. Department of Commerce’s decision to add a citizenship question to the 2020 Census:

“In yet another assault on immigrants, Latinos and the 2020 Census, the U.S. Department of Commerce and Trump Administration today chose to put politics above the interests of the American people. By deciding to add a citizenship question to the 2020 Census at the 11th hour, U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross has further undermined the integrity of one of the most preeminent scientific agencies in the world, further jeopardizing the accuracy of the 2020 Census and wasting millions of taxpayer dollars in the process.

“The addition of any question at this moment in time would have catastrophic consequences for Latinos and all Americans. As a member of the U.S. Census Bureau’s National Advisory Committee on National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic and Other Populations, I have seen firsthand the careful and costly research and testing that the Bureau undertakes over a period of many years to develop the questions used for the decennial count. Preparations for this upcoming 2020 Census have been underway since 2008, with the Bureau’s final test taking place now in Providence County (R.I.).

“Set to validate the Bureau’s readiness for the operations, procedures, systems, and field infrastructure for the once in a decade census that will take place in less than two years, the final testing in Providence is not utilizing questionnaire forms that include a question on citizenship. This means that the addition of this topic to the 2020 Census, if successful, would be implemented blindly without any scientific evaluation of what kind of impact it would have on public response rates or the follow up needed for those who may not answer the questionnaire.

“As I expressed to U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross personally in a phone conversation days ago, the addition of any question at this point would be costly and disastrous. Field representatives conducting surveys and other experiments are already reporting widespread and unprecedented fear among test respondents. Adding a question on citizenship at this time

would only seek to fan the flames of fear and distrust in the Census, further risking depressed response rates.

"There are no second chances with the census. Estimates from the Census Bureau show that every one percent decrease in the self-response rate will increase the cost of the census by \$55 million.

"Opposition to an untested and last-minute addition of a citizenship question to the 2020 Census has been swift and widespread. The American Sociological Association, six former Census Bureau Directors from both Republican and Democratic administrations, more than 161 Mayors, 19 State Attorneys General, and numerous leaders in the business community have all come out publicly against this effort.

"While we had hoped for the best, NALEO Educational Fund has been preparing for the worst, knowing that it would be up to organizations like us who believe in our democracy to fight back should this untimely, unnecessary and unwise decision come to fruition. In the coming days, weeks, and months, we will stand alongside partners and colleagues from across the country as the battle to reverse this costly course of action heats up in both Congress and the courts.

"The stakes are too high for a failed 2020 Census, and we will not sit idly by as those with malice intentions seek to thwart a fair and accurate count of immigrants, Latinos and all Americans. The fight has just begun, and we will not stop until we have exhausted all avenues to provide the Census Bureau with the fix and certainty it needs to tackle its most ambitious task yet, counting the largest American population in history."

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About NALEO Educational Fund

NALEO Educational Fund is the nation's leading non-profit, non-partisan organization that facilitates the full participation of Latinos in the American political process, from citizenship to public service.