



# NEWS

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

#### **Montgomery County Commissioners Arkoosh and Lawrence Join Effort to Restore October 31 Census 2020 Response Deadline Extension**

**Norristown, PA (September 4, 2020)** – Dr. Valerie A., Arkoosh, Chair, and Kenneth E. Lawrence, Jr., Vice Chair, of the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners announced their support to block the Trump administration’s effort to end the 2020 Census counting one month earlier than planned. The announcement was made on September 3 during the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners meeting.

The constitutionally required count of everyone living in the United States had been extended to October 31, 2020, due to the coronavirus pandemic. But, the Census Bureau announced in August that it would move up the deadline and end the count on September 30.

“Moving the COVID-19 census response deadline from October 31 to September 30 will put Montgomery County at great risk of losing tens of millions of dollars in funding for our most critical programs and services,” said Arkoosh.

A lawsuit, citing the high stakes of a botched census, has been filed against the U.S. Commerce Department, which oversees the census count for the federal Census Bureau. The suit led by the National Urban League and the League of Women Voters was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California.

“Undercounted cities, counties, and municipalities will lose representation in Congress and tens of millions of dollars in funding,” the lawsuit reads. “And communities of color will lose core political power and vital services. In contrast to these dire stakes, the immediate solution to this problem is simple: set aside and enjoin implementation of the impossible-shortened Rush Plan, which is based on an unexplained change of position, and allow the Census Bureau to implement the plan that it had designed to fulfill its constitutional duties during the pandemic.”

Nationally and locally, response rates have been lower in census tracts with larger shares of Hispanic residents or those with more people living in poverty; two groups that will be disproportionately impacted by an undercount.

To support blocking the Trump administration’s actions, Santa Clara County in California authored an amicus brief filed on August 31, 2020. The brief was on behalf of a diverse collection of local jurisdictions that collectively represent more than 25 million residents. They include The counties of Santa Clara, Marin, Monterey, San Mateo in California, along with the cities of Stockton, Oakland, Santa Cruz, and Sacramento in California and the Los Angeles Unified School District, Cook county, Illinois, Portland, Oregon, New York City, Boston, Austin, Dallas, and Seattle. Bucks and Delaware counties have also signed on to the brief.

The main point of the brief is to emphasize to the federal court that the defendants' August 3, 2020, decision to cut short 2020 Census operations amid the COVID-19 pandemic will undermine the census in at least two key ways. First, it will substantially exacerbate the problem of more individuals from hard-to-count groups going uncounted as compared to the general population, i.e., a differential undercount. Second, it will compromise the quality of census data produced about local populations.

The brief explicitly references Montgomery County, where it points out the potential harm that the shortened count might cause.

The brief points out that, "By way of example, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania estimates that a five percent undercount of its residents could cost the county more than \$72 million in federal funding for schools, infrastructure, Medicaid, SNAP, housing vouchers, and other programs."

"We are waiting and hoping that the court will allow us to go back to the original extension date of October 31 to collect the data we need to serve the residents most in need of these funds," said Lawrence.

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