

Statement for the Record: Hearing Entitled “Oversight of the U.S. Census Bureau”
Committee on Oversight & Accountability
Congressman Gerry Connolly
Thursday, December 5, 10:00 a.m.

If you ask our Republican colleagues why we’re here today, they’ll tell you it’s to ensure the integrity of the 2030 Census. The decennial census plays a fundamental role in determining how seats in the U.S. House of Representatives are apportioned and how federal resources are allocated. Given its importance, I welcome the chance for meaningful oversight of the Census Bureau. But let’s not ignore the facts: Republicans have spent years trying to undermine this constitutionally enshrined process while now claiming they want to protect it.

The facts are simple. Wilbur Ross lied, and the credibility of the U.S. Census under Republican leadership died. My Republican colleagues allege—without credible evidence—that the 2020 Census was manipulated for partisan gain. In reality the Trump administration targeted the 2020 Census with political manipulation, lies, and budget cuts. Despite these attacks and the operational delays posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Census Bureau ultimately administered a transparent and independent process.

The greatest threat to the integrity of the 2020 Census came from the Trump administration’s blatant lies to justify including a citizenship question. Then-Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross claimed this question was necessary to enforce the Voting Rights Act. The Supreme Court rejected this rationale as “contrived” after leaked emails revealed the real intent behind its inclusion was to create a structural advantage for Republicans by reducing representation of diverse and immigrant-heavy communities. This approach not only undermines the accuracy of the census but runs counter to the Constitution’s mandate to count every person residing in the United States for the purpose of fair representation and resource distribution. This court decision reaffirmed what the evidence showed: the administration sought to break precedent and constitutional norms for political gain.

Now imagine a future Trump administration with similar political designs on the 2030 Census, but this time with hundreds of partisan loyalists installed at the Commerce Department and Census Bureau in place of expert, dedicated civil servants. By advancing Schedule F, the Trump purge of the federal government, and excusing past political manipulation of the Census, my Republican colleagues are laying groundwork for future attacks on the integrity of the Census Bureau and its fundamental mission.

If Republicans care about integrity, they should focus on fully funding and modernizing the Census Bureau. The 2020 Census introduced innovations that streamlined operations and improved efficiency. However, funding cuts before the 2020 Census forced the Bureau to scale back vital end-to-end testing, leaving new processes untested in critical rural and hard-to-reach areas. As someone with experience modernizing federal IT systems, I can attest that large-scale, data-driven operations like the Census require upfront investment to mitigate risks and ensure long-term savings. The Census Bureau’s modernization efforts for 2030, including advanced technology and data collection methods, must be adequately funded to protect the accuracy and credibility of this essential undertaking.

The Census is a scientific, non-political undertaking enshrined in the Constitution. It provides data that underpins our democracy and drives federal funding for essential programs. Undermining its

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work through budget cuts and baseless accusations weakens not only the Census but the communities it serves. We should all agree that investing in a modern, well-funded Census Bureau is the best way to ensure integrity, accuracy, and fairness for 2030 and beyond.