



Chair Reince Priebus
Republican National Committee

Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Democrat National Committee

Dear Chair Priebus and Chair Wasserman Schultz,

On behalf of our many members in the American business community, we call for both presidential party platforms to include strong support for the 2020 Census and the related American Community Survey (ACS).

The decennial Census and the ACS (the rolling survey that replaced the old Census long form, sent to 3.5 million addresses every year) are key programs that businesses across America use to promote economic development, identify potential customers and create jobs. They are also among the few functions of the federal government required by the U.S. Constitution (Article I, sec. 2, clause 3). James Madison himself successfully called for the Census to include a useful range of data to support prudent decision-making in the first Census Act the new federal Legislature enacted.

ACS data, in particular, are an irreplaceable tool for business and industry in every American community. There is simply no other source of objective, high-quality, detailed socio-economic information that is comparable across time and geography (for example, to accurately compare downtown New York with rural Kentucky). The data allow us to analyze current and trending demographic and economic shifts, and to plan future investments accordingly.

Despite past attempts in the U.S. House of Representatives to make response to the ACS voluntary, strong evidence shows that such a change would greatly diminish the reliability and availability of ACS data for all communities, especially smaller jurisdictions and rural areas.¹ Meanwhile, the burden on respondents is low: approximately 40 minutes per household every 40 years.

Accurate data from the decennial Census and the ACS are central to promoting economic growth, guiding the prudent allocation of public and private resources,² and sustaining a strong democracy. We urge you to include support for the full funding and integrity of the ACS and 2020 Census in the 2016 Democrat and Republican platforms.

Sincerely,
 International Council of Shopping Centers
 Internet Association
 Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University
 Marketing Research Association
 National Apartment Association

National Association of Home Builders
 National Association of Realtors
 National Automobile Dealers Association
 National Retail Federation

¹ We likely would be unable to produce usable data for more than 40 percent of all U.S. counties, or for small cities, towns, neighborhoods, and native reservations, if response to the ACS were voluntary. See this map of the counties that, in the Census Bureau's best case scenario, would go without useable data in a voluntary response ACS: http://www.marketingresearch.org/sites/default/files/misc_files/mra-map-impact-voluntary-acs-5-21-15.pdf

² Congress allocates more than \$415 billion a year in federal assistance to states and localities (more than 2/3 of all federal grant funding) based on ACS data. Without proper ACS data, funding recipients would have to be chosen by Congressional earmarks or bureaucratic whim.