

September 4, 2025

Via Email

The Honorable Charles Grassley
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Durbin
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rand Paul
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Gary Peters
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable James Jordan
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jamie Raskin
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable James Comer
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and
Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Robert Garcia
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and
Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Urgent congressional action needed to halt racially discriminatory census and redistricting efforts

Dear Chairmen Grassley, Paul, Jordan, and Comer, and Ranking Members Durbin, Peters, Raskin, and Garcia:

We are a broad, diverse, and united coalition of nonpartisan organizations representing the full spectrum of America's civil rights and good government community. We write to sound the alarm over a dangerous and coordinated effort to weaponize the census and redistricting processes to suppress the political power of Black, Latino, and other historically oppressed communities. What we are facing is not a series of isolated state and federal proposals, but a deliberate campaign to manipulate two of the most fundamental pillars of our democracy to

seemingly entrench white political power and lock out a rapidly diversifying electorate from meaningful representation in our government. If left unchecked, these measures will distort representation for decades, stripping communities of their voices in government and the resources they are entitled to under the law.

The census is the basis of our representative system of government. When exploited, redistricting ceases to ensure equal representation and becomes a tool of political erasure. For more than a century, communities of color have been denied full participation in our democracy through explicit racial disenfranchisement and related forms of structural manipulation. From Jim Crow's poll taxes and literacy tests, to modern-day intentional census undercounts and surgically precise racial and partisan gerrymanders, the objective remains painfully clear: those who fear a representative democracy are seeking to maintain power by diminishing the political influence of communities historically excluded from it. The Supreme Court's decisions in *Shelby County v. Holder*, *Alexander v. South Carolina NAACP*, and *Rucho v. Common Cause* have only deepened this crisis, gutting vital protections under the Voting Rights Act and insulating partisan gerrymandering, often a proxy for racial discrimination, from federal judicial review. Bad actors have taken these rulings as an invitation to redraw maps and recalibrate counting methods in ways that would have been unthinkable under prior federal oversight.

Recent developments in Texas, Florida, and previously in North Carolina, underscore the scope and urgency of this threat. In Texas, despite Black and Latino residents accounting for most of the state's population growth, Governor Greg Abbott's proposed maps attempt to fracture these communities across multiple districts or pack these communities into one district, strategically diluting their collective voting power. This is a textbook case of racial vote dilution disguised as partisan line-drawing. This is not an isolated maneuver. Florida is preparing to follow suit, poised to take an unprecedented step of conducting a mid-year redistricting—an extreme power grab aimed at locking in partisan dominance. And in North Carolina, Republican lawmakers in 2023 enacted new legislative and congressional maps that dismantled Black-majority districts, merging those voters into predominantly white districts to flip the state's congressional delegation and cement partisan control of the state legislature. Together, these manipulations were engineered to ensure one party's dominance and to diminish the political agency of voters of color.

These state-level schemes are part of a broader federal strategy. President Trump's recent directive for a mid-decade census, which has never been conducted in American history, would intentionally exclude undocumented immigrants from the count. This unprecedented action is designed to manufacture an undercount that disproportionately impacts communities of color. Additionally, this action would upend more than two centuries of constitutional law requiring the census to count *all* persons residing in the United States, regardless of citizenship or immigration status.

Efforts to exclude undocumented immigrants from the census are the latest manifestation of a long lineage of racial and nativist attempts to suppress the political influence of immigrant-rich communities. Further, it bears emphasizing: federal and state laws prohibit anyone who is not a citizen of the United States from voting in federal elections, and there is no evidence that they are attempting to do so in any significant numbers. In fact, the real effect of excluding undocumented immigrants from the census is not to “protect” the vote, but to strip political representation and federal resources from diverse states and historically oppressed communities.

Census and redistricting are not only about representation; they are also about survival for historically underfunded and underserved communities. Accurate census count is necessary because it will determine how billions in federal funding are distributed for healthcare, education, housing, food security, infrastructure, and social services. An undercount—or one that completely excludes noncitizens and/or undocumented individuals—will detrimentally impact these communities by starving them of resources and exacerbating racial inequities.

Congress has the constitutional authority and the moral obligation to prevent this unconstitutional and immoral attempt to entrench minority rule. If the courts refuse to intervene, Congress must use all its oversight, investigatory, and legislative powers to defend these democratic principles.

We therefore urge the House and Senate Judiciary Committees, the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee to take the following steps without delay:

- **Investigate and hold hearings** on racially discriminatory redistricting plans and any proposals for a mid-decade census that exclude noncitizens.
- **Block any unconstitutional manipulation of the census**, ensuring that every person is counted regardless of citizenship status, consistent with constitutional and historical precedent.
- **Advance legislation to restore and strengthen the right to vote**, including passage of the Freedom to Vote Act, and the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.
- **Reject the SAVE Act and other proposals** that would impose unnecessary barriers to voter registration and disproportionately impact voters of color.
- **Reaffirm Congress’s role as a guardian of democracy**, legislating where courts have abdicated responsibility, and protecting the principle of fair and equal representation for all.

The census and redistricting are distinct but equally vital constitutional mandates. The census ensures that *everyone*, regardless of race, citizenship, or political affiliation, is counted, forming

the factual foundation for representation in our democracy and federal resource allocation. Redistricting, in turn, translates that count into political maps that determine how communities are represented in Congress, legislative districts, and local governments. Allowing these foundational processes to be manipulated into tools of exclusion will create lasting and potentially irreversible damage.

History will remember whether this Congress rose to defend the promise of equal and fair representation or stood silent as it was dismantled piece by piece. We urge you to act with the full measure of your authority and conviction to stop this assault on our democracy.

Respectfully submitted,

Black Voters Matter Fund
Democracy Defenders Action
Common Cause
Democracy Rising
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)
Equal Ground Action Fund
Equal Justice Society
Equality California
Fair Count
FairVote
Faiths for Safe Water
Florida For All
Free Speech For People
Freedom From Religion Foundation
Indivisible Santa Fe
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
League of Women Voters of the United States
National Action Network
National Association of Social Workers
National Organization for Women
National Redistricting Foundation
National Urban League
National Women's Law Center Action Fund
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Oregonizers
Progressive Turnout Project
Secure Elections Network
Silver State Equality

Stand Up America
Transformative Justice Coalition
Turnout Action Fund
Turnout Education Fund
Voices for Progress

cc: The Honorable John Thune, Senate Majority Leader
 The Honorable Charles Schumer, Senate Minority Leader
 The Honorable Mike Johnson, Speaker of the House
 The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries, House Minority Leader