



19th Annual Skeet, Trap & Pheasant Shoot

October 25-26, 2017 · Whitetail Preserve · Conyngham, PA



Confirm your [registration](#) and [sponsorship](#). [More at bcapa.com](http://bcapa.com).

A block of rooms has been reserved at the [Hampton Inn, Hazleton](#), located just west of Exit 145 (West Hazleton) of I-81, off PA 93 at Top of the Eighties Road. Room rate is \$99.00, tax not included. Please call the Hampton Inn at 570-454-3449 to make your reservation and specify you are with the "Broadband Cable Group."



September 11, 2017

[Bloomberg Equifax's Hacking Nightmare Gets Even Worse For Victims](#)

The U.S. Census Bureau is facing a host of challenges with 2020 on the horizon, including budget shortfalls, cost overruns and a shakeup atop the agency – the sudden resignation of Director John H. Thompson in June. There's apprehension among some groups that President Donald Trump's hard-line stance on immigration could depress participation, though questions are not asked about immigration status.

[USA TODAY Free Wi-Fi after Hurricane Irma? Comcast has Florida covered](#)

It all adds up to one central fear: a census that falls short of an accurate count of the population. The data from that decennial survey are used to map congressional districts, inform policymaking and steer billions of dollars in government resources where they're needed.

[Wall Street Journal The Future of Home Wi-Fi is Fast, Expensive, Exotic \(subscription required\)](#)

The Government Accountability Office has already placed the 2020 census on its "high-risk list" of programs that are facing peril. There's a precedent – the 2010 census was also designated a high-risk project, as was the 2000 census before it.

[Dallas News Harvey will lead to drop in customers, take years of rebuilding, says AT&T executive John Stankey](#)

This time, though, there's a bigger problem. The Census Bureau is readying new technology systems that still need testing, and a lack of funding has already forced the bureau to cancel or scale down some trial runs. "If you don't test those mechanisms, you risk a failed census," said Phil Sparks, communications chief at the Census Bureau during the Clinton administration and a co-director of the Census Project, a coalition of groups that rely on objective census data.

[Wall Street Journal CMO Today: Facebook's \\$1 Billion Content Budget; Disney to Stream 'Star](#)

A new data-collecting and processing system in the works has been billed as a way for the Census Bureau to save taxpayers more than \$5 billion over the decade, combined with other innovations. For the first time, the agency plans to let people submit their data online, potentially raising response rates and cutting down on costlier follow-up work with those who don't reply. It also wants to use online technology to verify addresses ahead of the census rather than sending staffers into the streets.

For the follow-up fieldwork of contacting "nonresponsive" households, the Census Bureau plans to equip staff with handheld mobile devices rather than the pen-and-paper system used through the last census. The agency had attempted to make that technological jump in 2010. But major problems with the devices were revealed during testing, so following up with nonresponsive households – the bureau's largest and most costly field operation – was again conducted using the old paper-based system.

That late decision to abandon the new technology plan raised the cost of the 2010 census by up to \$3 billion, according to the GAO, making the 2010 test the most expensive ever. If the Census Bureau must fall back on the old methods for 2020, lawmakers and advocates fear costs could again balloon.

[Wars'; Hulu and Spotify Partnership](#)

[Dallas News Why AT&T craves Time Warner](#)

[TechDirt Spotify Finally Realizes That Streaming Isn't Reproduction Or Distribution](#)

Because of the somewhat sparse funding levels now under discussion by Congress and the White House, Census Bureau officials in July indicated they will scrap key portions of the dress rehearsal at two of the three testing sites planned for 2018. One of those sites, a group of counties in southern West Virginia, was seen as a crucial trial of the government's ability to reach households in rural, hard-to-reach parts of the country.

"In rural areas, there's lack of broadband, you have particular challenges in terms of addresses, etc., and all of these things needed to be tested because this is a new method of taking the census. And it's apparently not going to be done," Sparks said. A test planned for urban Providence, R.I., is expected to go forward in full.

At the top of the list of problems is serial underfunding by lawmakers compared to what the Census Bureau says it needs to adequately prepare for the next census starting April 1, 2020.

Congress appropriated \$1.47 billion to the Census Bureau in fiscal 2017, an increase from the previous year but about \$160 million less than what the Obama administration had requested. This year, the Trump administration and the House and Senate Appropriations committees have all proposed giving the Census Bureau about \$1.5 billion for fiscal 2018, which begins Oct. 1. That would be a slight increase from current spending – but short of what may be needed as 2020 approaches.

Rep. Nita M. Lowey of New York, top Democrat on the House Appropriations panel, has called the proposed numbers "shockingly insufficient with 2020 looming."

Census analysts have said the bureau likely needs \$1.8 billion in fiscal 2018, about what the Obama administration had estimated would be needed then, according to preliminary Census Bureau numbers from last year.

Rep. Matt Cartwright, a Pennsylvania Democrat, said the 4 percent bump over current spending levels that House appropriators proposed is "inadequate and unrealistic" compared to the typical annual increase this far into the 10-year cycle.

"There was a 17 percent increase between '07 and '08 in preparation for the 2010 census," says Cartwright, a member of the Commerce-Justice-Science Appropriations Subcommittee, which funds the census.

Congress in recent decades has tended to keep census funding low in the early years of the decade and ramp it up later, sometimes to meet a backlog of needs. "In the seventh, eighth, ninth and 10th years of each of the decades, there's a significant ramp-up of both activities and funding in order to prepare for the census," Sparks said. "And that's just not happening under the Trump budget."

At a committee markup in July, Lowey and other Democrats backed an amendment that would pour extra money into the Census Bureau, along with other agencies. The proposal was defeated 22-30 on a party-line vote. "We simply do not have the funding available within our allocation," said Rep. John Culberson of Texas, the Commerce-Justice-Science chairman. "We're waiting on that bigger budget deal to allow us to fill some of these holes."

The budget agreement Culberson mentions could be the key to an influx of funds for the Census Bureau and other agencies and programs. Top lawmakers and the White House sometime this fall are expected to negotiate new overall discretionary spending levels for fiscal 2018, likely billions of dollars higher than the statutory budget caps prescribed by a 2011 deficit control law.

While Democratic appropriators have argued that the bureau needs more money to fulfill its mission, Republicans have largely focused their attention on cost overruns and other missteps by the agency. For one, the new data-processing system is on track to exceed its projected 10-year costs by \$309 million, as Thompson told House appropriators in May. That 47 percent increase stoked the ire of many Republicans on the panel.

"It seems to happen every 10 years," Culberson said. "It's distressing to see the 2020 census look like it's headed the same direction as the 2010 census, with terrific cost overruns. It's just not acceptable." His Senate counterpart, Republican Richard C. Shelby of Alabama, similarly warned in June that the 2020 census has become a "very expensive item."

"This subcommittee has been consistently concerned with the ballooning cost of the decennial census," Shelby said at a hearing. Some Democrats have said it's unrealistic to expect census officials to just do more with less.

Just as worrisome for census advocates is the strong possibility that Congress will not agree on any new appropriations by the start of the next fiscal year and instead pass a continuing resolution, extending current funding to avoid a partial government shutdown. Under a CR last year, the Census Bureau was forced to cancel field tests planned in Puerto Rico and on several reservations.

"As we enter fiscal 2017, we don't have clarity about our funding for the year," Thompson said at the time. "Continuing amid such uncertainty would all but guarantee wasted efforts and resources."

Another stopgap measure could be even more damaging this year unless Congress writes a so-called anomaly for the Census Bureau, which would allow the agency more funds or more flexibility to spend money.

A creeping fear among some census advocates is what they consider hostile rhetoric from the Trump administration towards immigrants. That could dampen participation in census surveys and potentially skew the data. Concerns have been sparked that some immigrants will be afraid to provide personal information to the government, even if it's not about whether they are citizens.

"It's going to be harder to overcome this anti-immigrant rhetoric," Sparks said. "This is going to make it much more difficult to ascertain what the true number is for the Latino population, along with other immigration populations. The growing Asian-American population, for instance." Accurately counting minority groups has always been a challenge. Censuses historically have undercounted racial minorities and overcounted non-Latino white residents, according to analysis from the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service.

Terri Ann Lowenthal, former staff director of a House subcommittee that oversaw the Census Bureau, said she's more worried about an inaccurate census this decade than those past, in part because of Trump. "There's an environment that many immigrants and their families feel is unwelcoming and therefore might keep them from participating," says Lowenthal, who's worked for both Democrats and Republicans on the Hill.

With a potential storm approaching, it doesn't help the Census Bureau to have no permanent director at the helm.

Thompson's resignation, announced in May and effective at the end of June, caught some lawmakers and census watchers off guard. A holdover from the Obama administration, Thompson was expected to remain through 2017 or until replaced by a Trump appointee.

The White House has yet to make an appointment for director of the agency. Until one is confirmed, an interim director is running the show. "This is a critical time for a political spokesperson for the Census Bureau to be up there on behalf of the bureau arguing for more budget money," Sparks said.

But the Census Bureau might have another influential figure in its corner: Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, whose department includes the bureau. Ross has noted his personal connection as a census-taker decades ago, when he was a business student at Harvard University. "I literally was an enumerator with the big white belt and the badge, going around Scollay Square in Boston. So I understand quite a little bit about the groundwork that's needed to be done," Ross told House appropriators in May, referring to a square torn down in the early 1960s.

Ross has taken steps to get a handle on rising costs at the Census Bureau. He assembled a task force of officials from Commerce and the White House Office of Management and Budget, as well as outside experts, to identify how that 47 percent overrun occurred and how to prevent others.

The task force will re-examine the likely costs of the remaining years of 2020 census preparation and come up with a new budget number for lawmakers. "As we sit here at this moment, I don't have a totally reliable figure for you. When I come back, it'll be a figure I can stand behind."

There's little clarity about what Congress and the administration will do to get the census back on track, but there's broad agreement that the stakes are high and very personal for lawmakers. The

census data are central to congressional redistricting that will begin shortly after the census is completed, shaping national politics and potentially control of the U.S. House for the next decade.

It's also used by federal lawmakers to effectively direct aid back to their districts. "We fund \$600 billion a year in vital federal assistance to our states and our districts based on data derived from the census," says Rep. Grace Meng, a New York Democrat on the Commerce-Justice-Science Appropriations Subcommittee.

The ramifications of an inaccurate census would be felt by state and local governments, who also use the data to target their own resources and projects for the right areas, to plan for emergency response operations and much more. Major industries would feel the shockwaves.

Congress and the White House face crucial decisions in the short term. Current government funding is set to expire at midnight on Sept. 30. There's a long-term deadline lawmakers should keep in mind, too: April 1, 2020. – **CQ Roll Call**

