The National Congress of American Indians
Resolution #MKE-17-050

TITLE: Support for Census Programs, Surveys, and Other Critical Preparations for Accurate Enumeration in the 2020 Census

WHEREAS, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

WHEREAS, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

WHEREAS, the United States Census is mandated by the United States Constitution; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Population is enumerated every 10 years and census data are used to allocate Congressional seats, electoral votes, and is the basis for funding allocations for federally funded programs; and

WHEREAS, federal funding for Indian schools, Indian education programs, Indian health programs, Indian housing programs, water and sewage projects, roads and economic development are based on data collected by the Census Bureau every ten (10) years; and

WHEREAS, the allocation of congressional seats across the United States are directly tied to data collected by the U.S. Census; and

WHEREAS, Pub. L. No. 94-171 data is used for redistricting at the federal, state, and local levels and an accurate count is necessary to ensure that American Indian and Alaska Native voters have an equal voice in the political process of non-tribal elections; and

WHEREAS, in the 2010 Census, the Census Bureau estimates that American Indians and Alaska Natives living on reservations or in Native villages were undercounted by approximately 4.9 percent, more than double the undercount rate of the next closest population group; and
WHEREAS, uncertainty about FY 2017 funding levels and lack of appropriations resulted in the Census Bureau canceling planned field tests on the Standing Rock Reservation in North and South Dakota and the Colville Reservation and Off-Reservation Trust land in Washington State, which eliminated critical testing of methods for the 2020 Census for counting people in tribal areas lacking street addresses, testing methods of making in-person counts in American Indian and Alaska Native households, and determining where and how to use oversampling to counteract the undercount facing Native people living on reservations and in Native villages; and

WHEREAS, later this year the Federal Interagency Working Group for Revision of the Standards for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity is expected to finalize Federal Standards for revised questionnaire format and reporting categories for American Indians and Alaska Natives that may not be sufficiently tested or publicized in Indian Country due to inadequate funding; and

WHEREAS, inadequate funding and uncertainty about future appropriations has caused the Census Bureau to shift funding away from other important Census Bureau programs, such as the American Community Survey (which is used, among other things, for identifying locations where assistance must be provided to voters in American Indian and Alaska Native languages), to cover shortfalls in activities critical to the 2020 Census; and

WHEREAS, inadequate funding has compelled the Census Bureau to announce “pauses” and modifications for key 2020 Census activities, which could greatly diminish the Bureau’s ability to take an accurate, cost-effective census and is expected to increase the disproportionate undercount of American Indian and Alaska Natives, especially those living in rural, low-income, geographically isolated, and/or linguistically isolated households; and

WHEREAS, the final appropriation for FY 2017 funding for the Census Bureau was $1.47 billion, a shortfall of $164 million for the minimal level of funding necessary to keep Census programs running and to adequately prepare for the 2020 Census; and

WHEREAS, the President’s FY 2018 budget requests a mere two percent ($27 million) increase over the already underfunded FY 2017 funding of $1.47 billion, which places at risk 2020 Census preparation activities including cancellation of two out of the three planned sites for the 2018 End-to-End test (which serves as a dry run of census operations), cancellation of an advertising campaign that is vital to reaching Native communities, delayed opening of Regional Census Centers, no testing at all to estimate the undercount estimates and accuracy of census for groups including American Indians and Alaska Natives, and a disproportionate reliance on enumeration through the Internet despite the lack of sufficient broadband access on nearly 90 percent of tribal lands.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) does hereby support the Census Bureau and the resources it needs, including appropriations of at least $1.8 billion for FY 2018 and such supplemental appropriations as may be needed to meet updated cost projections for the 2020 Census and other Census programs including the American Community Survey (ACS), the Current Population Survey (CPS), Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), and Small Area Health Insurance Estimates (SAHIE), which are critical to American Indians and Alaska Natives; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NCAI does hereby support restoration of the cancelled field tests on Tribal Lands and other testing, public education, and programs in preparation for the 2020 Census to ensure that American Indians and Alaska Natives are fully and accurately counted; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2017 Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Wisconsin Center in Milwaukee, WI, Oct 15, 2017 - Oct 20, 2017, with a quorum present.

ATTEST:

Jefferson Keel, President

Juana Majel Dixon, Recording Secretary