

**DRAFT – PRE-DECISIONAL**

- The Census Bureau is resuming operations in a phased restart that adheres to applicable guidance. As of May 8, 2020, field operations have been restarted in 77 Area Census Offices in 22 states. The Census Bureau will continue to resume operations on a rolling basis when it is safe to do so.
- As the Census Bureau restarts in reopened states, its primary focus is two-fold: 1) Update Leave (UL), which helps reach 5 million homes in the USA in rural and remote areas that lack city-style mail; and, 2) the processing for Nonresponse Followup (NRFU) enumerator onboarding.
- These operations must be completed before we can begin the NRFU enumeration work, where census takers will visit non-responding households and conduct in-person interviews to obtain census responses. On a rolling basis state-by-state, as these operations are completed NRFU can begin, assuming the state's rules allow for in-person interviews.
- But- to produce an accurate count- NRFU must be finished *everywhere* and in *every state* before we begin the post-collection Data Processing and Integrity activities, a lengthy, rigorous process which involves sequential computations and tabulations, and multiple rounds of quality assurance.
- The accuracy of the count is important to ensuring reapportionment and even redistricting can happen without considerable legal challenge. Even though Census operations are resuming earlier than planned when an extension was first contemplated, legislation extending certain deadlines is still necessary given the sequential nature of the decennial operations.
- You had asked whether the Census Bureau could compress certain operations in order to make up for lost time. While certain operations can and will be conducted simultaneously, the vast majority of the population in all states is enumerated with these operations which can only be conducted sequentially.
- Pursuant to OMB guidance, the Census Bureau *completely* suspended decennial field operations for **47 days** between March 18 and May 4. Some preparation and office work continued with mission critical employees and telework. But Update Leave (UL) and NRFU Hiring had to be stopped.
- **Update Leave:** Prior to March 18, approximately 10% of the initial UL workload had been completed. Under initial projections, 100% of the Update Leave workload should have been completed by April 17, leaving **30 days left in the operation** wherever it is conducted.
- **NRFU Enumerator Onboarding:** NRFU requires hiring and onboarding approximately 340,000-500,000 enumerators. This entails recruitment, selection, acceptance and gathering of any additional information, fingerprinting, background checks, onboarding, and training. The suspension of field operations curtailed preparation for this operation, as much of it required personal contact. NRFU was planned for May 13 through July 31. Based on the original schedule, this **leaves 56 days left to complete the onboarding process** and approximately **79 days to complete the operation**.

**Data Processing and Integrity:** Once the NRFU operation is complete, the Census Bureau immediately begins its Data Processing and Integrity activities. Most importantly, it requires all data be collected from field work and self-response before any work can begin. One of the most important aspects of data processing is the removal of duplicate entries within and across states lines. Additional inaccuracies are identified and removed. This quality check is necessary to ensure the process had integrity. Under the original schedule, this would have occurred from August 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020, or **152 days**, to produce accurate apportionment counts. It is worth noting the conditions will not be ideal, as the pandemic

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has made impacts that will require additional processing and expertise because populations have temporarily shifted. For example, many college students went home to their parents by Census Day and may have been double counted. After the apportionment counts are finalized, processing on redistricting data would begin, taking roughly **90 days** to complete for all 50 states.

- **If Census Bureau could fully restart today, under ideal conditions:** As a rough calculation: If today, May 8, the Census Bureau could restart Update Leave and NRFU Enumerator Onboarding in every state and locality, which it cannot, NRFU Enumerator on boarding could finish on June 3. However, Update Leave would finish on June 8, so the earliest you could field NRFU enumerators to begin that operation would be the following week, June 15. This means the earliest you could finish NRFU, even with the ability to restart immediately every state, is approximately September 1, 2020. By finishing NRFU on September 1, 2020, apportionment counts could not be delivered until January 31, 2021, already after the statutory deadline. Redistricting information would be provided to states by April 30, 2021, already after the statutory deadline.
- **Based on the initial suspension of field activities in line with OMB guidance, the Census Bureau can no longer meet its statutory deadlines for delivering apportionment and redistricting data, even conducting operations under unrealistically ideal conditions.**
- **Reality of Phased Restarting:** While the Census Bureau is looking to complete field operations as quickly as possible, the reality of the phased, rolling reopening of states is that it will be difficult to expect to start Update Leave and NRFU Enumerator Onboarding in the states that are furthest behind until the middle of June. This puts the Census Bureau closer to the second week of August before NRFU can fully begin.
- If NRFU begins in its last location by August 14, 2020, it can finish by October 31, 2020. If NRFU is completed by October 31, 2020, apportionment counts can be delivered by April 1, 2021. Redistricting information could be delivered by July 1, 2021. This would require a 90-day extension of the existing statutory deadlines for producing this data.
- **Due to the unpredictable nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as increased risks of hurricanes affecting the Southeast during NRFU, the Census Bureau in consultation with the Secretary of Commerce proposed a 120-day extension of the statutory deadline, to mitigate this risk and in order to make one single request of Congress and not need to come back for an additional extension.**
- The Secretary of Commerce and Census Bureau leadership have been conducting considerable outreach to state and local elected officials to promote 2020 Census participation. Multiple Governors have communicated with the Census Bureau or made public statements supporting an extension, including Governor Kay Ivey of Alabama. The Secretary has been calling local elected officials for low responding districts, and has found unanimous support for an extension.
- Finally, all of this extension is fully covered by the Census Bureau's already appropriated contingency budget.