



## Legislation Text

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### City of Alexandria, Virginia

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#### MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** APRIL 17, 2019

**TO:** THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

**DOCKET TITLE:**

Consideration of a Resolution in Support of an Accurate 2020 Census without Citizenship Question. [ROLL-CALL VOTE]

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**ISSUE:** Opposition to the Addition of a Citizenship Question on the 2020 Census.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council adopt the attached Resolution in support of an accurate 2020 Census without the citizenship question.

**BACKGROUND:** The 2020 Census is the opportunity to collect the most accurate count of United States residents for the next decade. An accurate count is critical to ensuring that all residents are fairly represented in federal and state government each time legislative districts are drawn and that Alexandria gets its fair share of resources to provide public services. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that any person not counted in Alexandria results in the loss of \$20,000 of funding over 10 years. On March 26, 2018, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross agreed to a Department of Justice request, and added a citizenship question to the 2020 Census questionnaire, after the opportunity for testing the effects of the question on data collection had passed, citing the need for better voting rights enforcement. The Census Bureau submitted the Census 2020 questionnaire to Congress, including a question on the citizenship status of residents. The decennial census has not included a citizenship question since 1950, prior to the enactment of the Voting Rights Act in 1965. Councilman Aguirre who chairs the City's Complete Count Committee initiated this resolution as part of the work of that committee. The City's Human Rights Commission also reviewed the resolution.

**DISCUSSION:** The City of Alexandria is one of 190 cities, counties, and state and local officials around the country represented in a brief filed with the U.S. Supreme Court to challenge the addition of a citizenship question on the 2020 Census. The brief, filed on April 1, 2019 in support of plaintiffs in the case Department of Commerce v. New York, argues that the addition of a citizenship question will significantly impair the accuracy of the count, which determines the allocation of more than \$900 billion of federal funding.

Although the U.S. Census Bureau is prohibited by law from sharing census responses with law enforcement, immigration, tax, or other agencies, research has shown that a citizenship question would reduce the accuracy of the count by more than five percent. Citizenship data is already collected in other ways, and the U.S. Constitution requires the Census to count every person, regardless of citizenship status.

**ATTACHMENT:** Proposed 2020 Census Resolution.

**STAFF:**

Debra Collins, Deputy City Manager

Jean Kelleher, Director, Office of Human Rights

Carrie Beach, Division Chief, Planning and Zoning

Sierra Latham, Urban Planner, Planning and Zoning