

Senator Tom Udall criticizes the president for cutting the 2020 Census count short

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SANTA FE — U.S. Senator Tom Udall, D-N.M., vice chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, released the following statement of opposition Oct. 14 after the Supreme Court suspended a lower court order that extended the Census Count beyond Oct. 15, allowing the Trump administration to cut the 2020 Census count off one month short. The shortened timeline, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, risks an inaccurate count in Indian Country and in New Mexico, potentially cutting resources short for minority and rural communities. Just a one percent undercount in New Mexico would cost the state hundreds of millions in federal resources over the coming decade:

“The Trump administration’s attempts to politicize and cut the 2020 Census short violates federal trust and treaty obligations to Tribes across the country. During a once-in-a-century pandemic that has hit Native communities disproportionately hard, the Trump administration has constrained community efforts to make sure every Native American is counted,” Udall said. “This has serious consequences for Indian Country, which is why the Trump administration should have engaged in meaningful consultation with Tribes before deciding to shorten the time that Tribes had to get the word out during a pandemic. It’s not simply numbers—an undercount in Tribal communities directly translates to less safe housing, fewer hospital beds, and fewer services that Tribal governments can provide to their citizens.”

“In New Mexico, the Census is critical to ensuring that our state receives the resources we need for school lunches, roads, health care from Medicare and Medicaid, and housing assistance. The Trump administration has directly targeted Hispanic and Latino communities and immigrant communities with rhetoric designed to have a chilling effect on their response to the 2020 Census. This contradicts the government’s constitutional mandate to count the ‘whole number of persons’ living in the United States. Immigrant communities and Hispanic and Latino

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communities proudly call New Mexico home, and contribute to our state's economy and way of life.

"The Trump administration should be pulling out all the stops to ensure everyone is counted, especially because the Census also plays an essential constitutional role in gathering data that is not only used for redistricting Congressional districts, state legislative districts, and school districts, but also for enforcing voting rights and civil rights legislation," Udall said.

"Many New Mexicans, Native Americans and American families are struggling to stay healthy while putting food on the table and keeping a roof over their families' head, and need more time to respond to the 2020 Census. Instead, the Trump administration is callously cutting off opportunities for communities to ensure they are counted in this critical Census. This is unacceptable, and I once again urge the Trump administration to extend this timeline to fulfill their constitutional duty," the senator concluded.