



Contact: June M. Shorthair  
Director  
Communications & Public Affairs Office  
P: 520-562-9715  
C: 520-610-6218  
[June.Shorthair@gric.nsn.us](mailto:June.Shorthair@gric.nsn.us)

---

**For Immediate Release**

**September 25, 2020**

**JUDGE RULES THAT CENSUS OPERATIONS MUST CONTINUE THROUGH OCTOBER 31, 2020,  
IN LITIGATION JOINED BY GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY**

Sacaton, AZ – Last evening, the United States District Court for the Northern District of California issued an order rejecting the Census Bureau’s plans to condense the timeframe for census operations from October 31, 2020 to September 30, 2020. The decision requires the Census Bureau to continue collecting census questionnaires through self-response and in-person enumeration through October 31 and also extends the deadline that reapportionment and redistricting data must be sent to the President to April and July 2021, respectively.

The Gila River Indian Community joined the litigation, *National Urban League et al. v. Wilbur L. Ross Jr. et al.*, to urge that tribal interests be considered.

Native Americans and Alaska Natives are historically the most undercounted population in the census. In 2010, the undercount for Natives was 4.9% - nearly twice that of the next closest population. An undercount in the census results in millions of dollars of federal funding being allocated away from Reservation programs and citizens to states and local governments.

In March, the Census Bureau acknowledged the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and suspended its field operations. In April, the Census Bureau issued a revised timeline for census operations to continue through October 31, 2020, and recommended the statutory deadlines for reporting of apportionment and redistricting data be extended to 2021. In the beginning of August, in an abrupt and legally unjustified reversal, the Census Bureau retracted the revised timeline and condensed the timeframe for census operations to September 30 – all but guaranteeing a complete and accurate census could not be achieved.

The Community joined the litigation seeking a return to the Census Bureau’s April plan for operations and reporting to continue to October 31. Today’s decision affirmed the Community’s position.

Governor Stephen Roe Lewis responded to the decision by stating, “I am pleased that the Court’s decision will provide additional time for census operations and provide the opportunity for a complete and accurate census. Indian Country is already the most undercounted population and we also have been the hardest hit by COVID-19, according to the CDC. To rush a census during a pandemic is an unnecessary assault against tribal nations – one that we would have to live with for the next ten years.

---

(More)



Contact: June M. Shorthair  
Director  
Communications & Public Affairs Office  
P: 520-562-9715  
C: 520-610-6218  
[June.Shorthair@gric.nsn.us](mailto:June.Shorthair@gric.nsn.us)

---

The United States Department of Justice may appeal the decision, and it may ultimately be up to the Supreme Court to make the final determination. Regarding next steps, Governor Lewis commented, "It is my hope the United States sees that today's decision was the right outcome and declines to appeal so we can put our resources into making sure the Gila River Indian Community and all of Indian Country are counted in this decennial census."

###

*The Gila River Indian Community is located on 372,000 acres in south-central Arizona and is home to the indigenous O'odham (Pima) and Pee Posh (Maricopa) people. The Tribe is comprised of seven districts. The administrative offices and departments are located in Sacaton and serve the people throughout these seven districts.*

---

(More)