



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

June 27, 2018

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New Memo Shows U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross Misled Congress and Public about Decision to Add Citizenship Question

Trump administration claims that consideration of a citizenship question addition initially originated from the U.S. Department of Justice proved untrue by release of latest memo

Washington D.C. – The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund today released a statement from Executive Director Arturo Vargas following the release of a supplemental memo from U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross addressing the addition of a citizenship question to the 2020 Census:

“The release of this [memo](#) makes clear that Secretary Wilbur Ross intentionally misled Congress and all Americans about the timing and motivations for adding a citizenship question to the 2020 Census.

“In his previous [communications](#), Secretary Ross claimed that the initial consideration of a citizenship question addition began in December 2017 following the U.S. Department of Justice’s (DOJ) request for citizenship data to be collected at the block level in order to better enforce the Voting Rights Act (VRA).

“The [memo](#) marks a striking reverse of course, with Secretary Ross now admitting that he began considering the addition of a citizenship question soon after being confirmed in February 2017 and that it was he who reached out to U.S. Department of Justice officials to ask them to make a formal request for the question to be added to the 2020 Census.

“This [development](#) confirms a blatant disregard for transparency and sound practices on the part of Secretary Ross, and calls into question whether there is an ongoing systemic effort within the Trump Administration to thwart a full and accurate count of Latinos and all Americans in 2020 through the addition of a citizenship question.

“We cannot risk having a failed count of our nation given the important role census data play in the allocation of billions of dollars in federal funds and the apportionment of political power.

“Congress must use its authority to conduct a thorough investigation to determine what the main factors were that led to this decision, including whether any information was knowingly withheld or misrepresented to Congress. The investigation should also assess the extent political motivations were the driving force behind the addition of a citizenship question to Census 2020.”

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About NALEO Educational Fund

NALEO Educational Fund is the nation's leading non-profit, non-partisan organization that facilitates the full participation of Latinos in the American political process, from citizenship to public service.