

United States Senate

August 4, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-220, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Leader McCarthy:

I write today requesting the extension of the statutory deadlines for the delivery of apportionment data and redistricting files following the 2020 Census be included in the next COVID-19 relief package. It is critical that we get a fair, accurate, and complete 2020 Census.

As you know, Census data is the basis for distributing federal funds to support our schools, hospitals, and fire departments. More than \$2 billion from 300 federal programs is allocated back to my state based on this information. This year, a complete count could even lead to another Montana representative in Congress, bringing more Montana common sense to Washington.

The global outbreak of COVID-19 creates new challenges for acquiring an accurate count. In April, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and Census Bureau Director Steven Dillingham asked Congress for an extension of the statutory deadlines to ensure everyone gets counted despite the setbacks of the pandemic. That's why I am extremely troubled that the Trump Administration rescinded their request and is closing field operations earlier than planned.

Not extending the Census deadline would have a devastating effect on my state for the next decade. Montana's response rate is still only 56 percent. Unfortunately these numbers are even lower in our rural and Tribal communities with several counties under the 30 percent mark. There is a lot of work left to do and frankly, not enough time to get it done correctly.

The next COVID-19 response package must include new deadlines in order to get a fair and complete count. I appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jon Tester". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jon Tester