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Ponca Tribe of Nebraska

9/23/26

George M. Cook

Performing the Duties of the Director

U.S. Census Bureau

4600 Silver Hill Road

Designation: ADDEMO/FRN

Washington, DC 20746

Submitted via: [Regulations.gov Portal](https://www.regulations.gov); cc: dee.a.alexander@census.gov

Re: Formal Tribal Consultation Request re: U.S. Census Bureau Proposed Rulemaking, 91 Fed. Reg. 57,524 (Sept. 10, 2026) (to be codified at 15 C.F.R. pts. 60, 70)

Dear Performing the Duties of the Director Cook,

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) submits this letter ahead of the U.S. Census Bureau's recently announced virtual [Tribal consultation](#) scheduled on Friday, October 2, 2026, from 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. ET. The consultation is intended to gather feedback on the Federal Register Notice (FRN) Decennial Census of Population of Americans; Proposed Residence Criteria and Proposed Regulations for Demographic Questions. We respectfully request the Census Bureau schedule two additional government-to-government consultations in October for Tribes to have an adequate opportunity to assess the proposed changes, and provide meaningful feedback within a reasonable timeframe.

NCAI, founded in 1944 and based in Washington, D.C., is the oldest and largest national organization composed of American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal governments and their citizens. NCAI advises and educates the public, state governments, and the federal government on a broad range of issues involving Tribal sovereignty, self-government, treaty rights, and policies affecting Tribal Nations. NCAI's primary focus is protecting the inherent sovereign rights of Tribal Nations through positions directed by consensus-based resolutions. These resolutions are adopted at NCAI national conventions by the organization's voting membership, which includes approximately 300 Tribal Nations each year.

We appreciate the Census Bureau's efforts to schedule the original September consultation and the extension of the Tribal Nation and Tribal-serving organization comment period deadline to Monday, November 2, 2026. These actions are consistent

with the Department's consultation responsibilities under Executive Order 13175, and the Department of Commerce 2013 Tribal Consultation and Coordination Policy.

However, we formally request that the Bureau convene two additional government-to-government consultations in October to provide the 575 federally recognized Tribal Nations in the United States with the time needed to meaningfully consult with the Bureau on a proposal that would have significant consequences for Indian Country, if implemented.

Given the scope and potential consequences of the proposal, additional consultations are necessary to provide Tribal governments and Tribal-serving organizations a meaningful opportunity to assess the proposed changes, analyze the impact on Tribal communities who operate federally funded programs, and consult directly with the Bureau to shape their final recommendations. Additional consultations are warranted, as the proposed changes could permanently affect the availability of accurate data on American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) populations. These data are foundational to calculating federal funding formulas, determining program eligibility, and determining resource allocations for federally funded programs serving Tribal communities and AI/AN citizens.

NCAI appreciates the Bureau's efforts to work with Tribal Nations on a government-to-government basis, as required by Executive Order 13175 and the Department of Commerce's Tribal Consultation and Coordination Policy. To fulfill those responsibilities, we ask the Department to meaningfully and adequately engage with Tribal Nations by scheduling at least two additional consultations before the November 2, 2026, comment deadline. We look forward to your response and to continued engagement regarding the proposed rule.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larry Wright, Jr.", with a stylized, cursive script.

Larry Wright, Jr.
Executive Director
National Congress of American Indians