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## NEW YORK JOINS WITH OTHER STATES IN LAWSUIT TO STOP CENSUS' CITIZENSHIP QUESTION

*Measure is aimed at reducing representation in states where the Democrats are strong, suit claims*

By Rebecca Davis O'Brien  
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Nearly two dozen U.S. states and cities filed a federal lawsuit Tuesday seeking to block the Trump administration's plan to ask respondents during the 2020 census if they are U.S. citizens, the latest salvo in an escalating battle.

Asking such a question, the lawsuit alleges, would depress participation in states with large immigrant populations, undermining the accuracy of the census. This, in turn, could diminish the states' representation in Congress and threaten billions of dollars in federal funding for infrastructure and Medicaid, according to the lawsuit, which was filed in federal court in Manhattan.

Last week, after California's attorney general filed suit over the proposal, a spokesman for the Commerce Department said litigation to block the citizenship question was without merit, adding that the department looked forward to prevailing in court and working with the Census Bureau to conduct the 2020 count.

In December, the Justice Department asked that the Census Bureau seek citizenship information in the 2020 census form, which is sent to every household in the U.S., saying such information was needed to enforce the Voting Rights Act.

In the weeks that followed, a number of states urged the Census Bureau not to collect citizenship information, while the Trump administration defended the proposal. On March 26, the Census Bureau said it would adopt the question. In its list of planned questions for the 2020 census, the bureau says the question would help enforce the voting law and provide information of interest to researchers, advocacy groups and policy makers.

New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, who is leading the coalition of states and cities filing the suit, said Tuesday that the Justice Department's claim was "transparently a pretext." Instead, he and other officials said at a news conference Tuesday, the measure is aimed at reducing representation in states where the Democratic Party is strong, intimidating immigrant families and giving political payback for states that have defied the Republican administration's immigration policies.

"This is just an effort to punish states like New York," Mr. Schneiderman said.

In addition to New York, the states filing the lawsuit are Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, Washington and the District of Columbia. New York City, Providence, R.I.; San Francisco and Seattle also joined the suit, as did the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

The lawsuit notes that the Census Bureau has previously declined to include similar questions about citizenship status, saying it would be treated with suspicion and reduce response from a "significant number of noncitizens."

Those risks, the lawsuit says, "are heightened in the current political climate because of President Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric and this administration's pattern of policies and actions that target immigrant communities."

About half of the 44 million immigrants are U.S. citizens, according to bureau data. Of those who aren't, about half are unauthorized immigrants, according to separate estimates made by the Pew Research Center and the Department of Homeland Security.

The Census Bureau referred a request for comment Tuesday to the Commerce Department, which didn't immediately respond.