



Census Bureau Director Robert Santos is resigning, making way for Trump's pick

UPDATED JANUARY 30, 2025 · 8:33 PM ET ⓘ



Hansi Lo Wang



U.S. Census Bureau Director Robert Santos testifies during a House Oversight Committee hearing on the bureau in December 2024 on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.

Mariam Zuhaib/AP

The director of the U.S. Census Bureau, Robert Santos, announced Thursday he is resigning, giving President Trump an early opportunity to nominate a new political appointee to lead the agency.

Arturo Vargas, chair of the bureau's 2030 Census Advisory Committee, tells NPR that the committee's members received an email announcement, a copy of which NPR has reviewed.

"It's been such an honor to serve our nation," Santos wrote Thursday in a [LinkedIn post](#) sharing NPR's story after it was published. The bureau's public information office did not immediately respond to NPR's inquiries.

The decision by Santos, who started as the bureau's director in 2022, cuts short a five-year appointment during key preparations for the 2030 census. The next constitutionally required head count of the country's residents is set to be used to

redistribute political representation and trillions in federal funding across the country over the next decade.



POLITICS

Trump rescinds Biden's census order, clearing a path for reshaping election maps

"It's always important for an agency as large as the Census Bureau to have stability in its most senior position, and we're at a critical point at the Census Bureau's preparations for the 2030 decennial census," says Vargas, the advisory committee chair, who is also the CEO for the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials. "I'll miss having somebody with the expertise and perspective that Santos has brought to the position as the bureau prepares for 2030."

Santos — a nationally recognized statistician who is the [first Latino to head the bureau](#) — joined the federal government's largest statistical agency as a Biden appointee after [years of interference](#) at the bureau by the first Trump administration.

Before becoming the agency's director, Santos was a vocal opponent of how Trump officials handled the 2020 census — including a last-minute decision to [end counting early](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic and a failed [push to add a question about U.S. citizenship status](#) that was likely to [deter many Latino and Asian American residents](#) from participating in the official population tally.



POLITICS

Experts warn about the 'crumbling infrastructure' of federal government data

During his three-year tenure, Santos made frequent outreach trips around the country in an attempt to rebuild public trust in the bureau's leadership.

"It's important for all Americans to understand that the bureau collects data for their benefit, and I think the outreach he oversaw helped rebuild confidence and interest in the Census Bureau's work," says Terri Ann Lowenthal, a census consultant who was once the staff director of the former House oversight subcommittee for the national tally.

Santos helped oversee the creation of a new committee of outside advisers for the 2030 census, as well as planned changes to how the bureau produces [statistics on race and ethnicity](#), a now-dropped, controversial proposal to transform [data about people with disabilities](#) and [research into how surveys can ask about sexual orientation and gender identity](#).

Many census watchers are concerned about who Trump names to be the bureau's next director. The first director appointed by Trump, Steven Dillingham, [stepped down](#) in 2021 shortly after whistleblower complaints about an attempt to rush the release of an incomplete data report on non-U.S. citizens. Trump's first administration also created multiple new positions for [political appointees](#) who had no obvious qualifications for serving at the bureau's top ranks.

"Any attempt to fill the position with someone involved in partisan political activities will undermine public confidence not only in the bureau's work but the nation's statistics generally," Lowenthal says.



POLITICS

A GOP plan for the census would revive Trump's failed push for a citizenship question



NATIONAL

The federal agency that measures racial diversity is led mostly by white people



READ & LISTEN

[Home](#)

[News](#)

[Culture](#)

[Music](#)

Podcasts & Shows

CONNECT

Newsletters

Facebook

Instagram

Press

Public Editor

Corrections

Contact & Help

ABOUT NPR

Overview

Diversity

NPR Network

Accessibility

Ethics

Finances

GET INVOLVED

Support Public Radio

Sponsor NPR

NPR Careers

NPR Shop

NPR Events

NPR Extra

terms of use

privacy

your privacy choices

text only