

Taiwanese in US demand ethnicity option in census

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Several Taiwanese-American organizations on Friday issued a joint letter, calling on the US Census Bureau to include a “Taiwanese” option to answer the ethnicity question in the next US national census in 2020.

The US Constitution requires a national census once every 10 years and according to the US Census Bureau, an individual’s response to the ethnicity question is based on self-identification.

The census forms do not have a “Taiwanese” option, which had prompted Taiwanese-American Citizens League, which also signed the letter, to urge Taiwanese-Americans to check the “other Asian” option in the ethnicity category and write “Taiwanese” in the 2010 census.

In Friday’s letter addressed to Chair of US Census Bureau’s National Advisory Committee Ditas Katague, the organizations said there are large discrepancies in government information on the Taiwanese-American population in the US, pointing to the 2010 census that set the population of Taiwanese-Americans at 230,382, whereas 2014 US Homeland Security data on Lawful Permanent Residents showed that the number of Taiwanese-Americans who have registered in the US between 1950 and 2010 was 450,673.

“Taiwanese-Americans all over the nation have expressed their concern and frustration about not knowing how many Taiwanese-Americans there are in the US. We campaign for a separate check box for ‘Taiwanese’ because Taiwanese-Americans want to be counted” said the letter, which was backed by 12 organizations, including the Formosan Association for Public Affairs (FAPA), Taiwanese Association of America, Formosan Association for Human Rights and North America Taiwanese Medical Association.

FAPA, a nonprofit Washington-based lobbying organization, has since 1997 been calling for a check box for “Taiwanese.”

At the time, it was told by the bureau that a 1997 US Department of State memorandum stipulated that “any listing of ‘Taiwanese’ as a race in a census questionnaire would inevitably

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raise sensitive political questions ... contrary to US government policy and US national interests.”

FAPA said in a statement that since the US Immigration and Naturalization Service already maintains a separate quota for Taiwanese coming to the US, there should be no reason for the bureau to continue omitting a Taiwanese check box.

“No foreign country should dictate how our own Census Bureau counts its citizens. Taiwanese-Americans today recognize that they are a separate ethnicity from Chinese-Americans and we must honor and respect that,” the letter said.

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