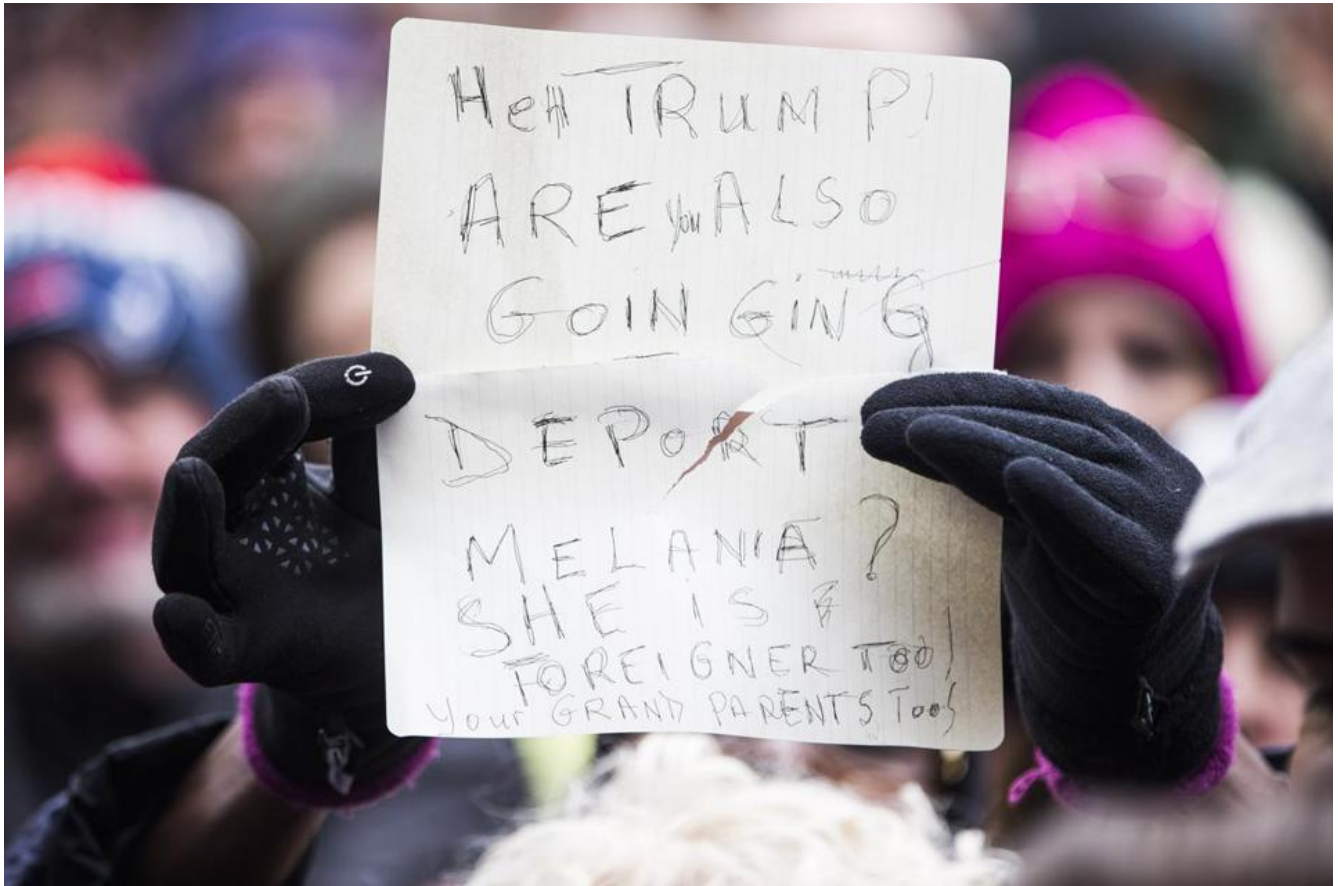


Could Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric hurt the Census?



KEITH BEDFORD/GLOBE STAFF

A protester held a sign during an anti-Trump demonstration.

By [Frank Phillips](#) | GLOBE STAFF MARCH 22, 2017

President Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric is raising alarms among state officials and immigrant advocates who fear it will create such havoc with the 2020 US Census that Massachusetts could risk a congressional seat and significant federal aid.

Those officials and community-based organizations are convinced that some foreign-born residents — both documented and undocumented — will be too fearful to answer questions from census gatherers because of the highly charged anti-immigrant policies and statements emanating from Washington.

“I am extremely alarmed that the rhetoric and the action of the Trump administration are going to make it very difficult to get cooperation from non-native-born residents of Massachusetts who should be counted,” said Secretary of State William F. Galvin, who oversees the state’s population count.

At stake is the political and fiscal future of Massachusetts because the federal government relies on the census, taken every 10 years, to determine the level of federal funds each state receives and the number of congressional seats they are allocated.

Get **Fast Forward** in your inbox:

Forget yesterday's news. Get what you need today in this early-morning email.

Sign Up

“We are dealing with a potential shortchanging that could badly damage the state for a decade to come,” said Galvin.

Galvin’s worry comes as the Trump administration is seeking to impose a ban on travel into the United States by citizens of several majority-Muslim countries and a 120-day pause on refugee resettlement from any

Comments
Additionally, it is pushing forward with plans for a wall along the southern border and has focused on strict enforcement of immigration laws, paving the way for more deportations and detentions.

The combined effect — along with Trump's strident comments about immigrants over the last several years — has left many fearful of interacting with government officials, immigration advocates say.



PAT GREENHOUSE/GLOBE STAFF/FILE 2010

Secretary of State William F. Galvin.

Facing the prospect of a serious undercount of foreign-born residents, Galvin is convening a workshop for several hundred or more local officials in Sturbridge on Thursday to figure out how to persuade immigrants to cooperate in the head count.

And although the next census is still a few years off, Galvin's office is already working on it. He has requested an additional \$350,000 in his 2018 budget for census data technical assistance. He said his office needs the money now because this is the only year Washington allows state and local government officials to correct and add data to the lists of addresses used to send out census-takers in 2020.

Galvin's angst about counting immigrants is echoed by advocates for foreign-born residents who say Trump's election and his vows to beef up deportations have convinced many people, even green-card holders, to avoid contact with local, state, and federal government authorities.

“Their fears are very legitimate,” said Eva A. Millona, executive director of Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition.

“Given the hysteria and the fact the immigrants are being seen through the lens of terrorism, it is really making them uncomfortable the way they are portrayed,” she said. “We have had a hard time in the past convincing every person regardless of their status to come forward. And now we see a much more difficult path.”

Michael Cook, a spokesman for the US Census Bureau, sought to allay those fears, stressing that any personal information given to census-takers is kept secret.

“Your information is protected by law,” Cook said in a written statement to the Globe. “It requires the Census Bureau to keep your information confidential and use your responses only to produce statistics. We cannot publicly release your responses in any way that could identify you or your business, organization, or institution.”

Massachusetts currently receives \$11 billion annually from the federal government, money used for welfare programs, school construction, housing, job training, and infrastructure improvements. In total, the federal government uses the census statistics to determine how nearly \$400 billion in federal funds are distributed to the states.

The current number of foreign-born residents in Massachusetts — more than 1 million of the state’s nearly 6.8 million population — are responsible for \$1.3 billion of the federal funds sent to the Commonwealth, according to Susan Strate, a demographer at the University of Massachusetts’ Demographic Institute, who tracks census data

Comments
Strate says an undercount of immigrants would disproportionately affect Massachusetts. The state ranks eighth in percentage of total population that is foreign born. And 20 percent of those residents have settled in the Commonwealth since 2010.

Strate said immigrants are also important for the state economy because the native population, mainly baby boomers, are leaving the workforce.

The last census, taken in 2010, showed that Massachusetts' population had grown by a few percentage points — to 6.55 million — but because of larger growth in other states, it lost one of its 10 congressional seats.

Galvin said there is an outside chance that Massachusetts could gain back its lost House seat because of population growth since then. A 2015 state population survey showed that Massachusetts has been the fastest-growing state in the region over the past six years, thanks to a influx of immigrants, Strate said.

At 16.1 percent, the current proportion of immigrants in Massachusetts is the same as in the 1850 census, after a flood of Irish, Germans, and other Europeans arrived in America, fleeing famine and political upheaval. It peaked at 31.6 percent in 1910, but dropped to less than 10 percent in the 1970s and 1980s, according to Strate.

Material from the State House News Service was used in this report. Frank Phillips can be reached at frank.phillips-@globe.com.

SHOW 4 COMMENTS

Stay updated. right in your news feed. [Like 164K](#)