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An expected vote from the U.S. Supreme Court on the added U.S. citizenship question in the 2020 census just hit a potential twist with newly submitted evidence that could influence the court's decision.

Material discovered on the hard drive files of deceased Republican strategist Thomas Hofeller shows that he played a key role in the decision to add the citizenship question as a means to create an advantage for whites and Republicans in future elections. During oral arguments before the Supreme Court during April 23, defendants of the citizenship question stressed that it was being added to protect minority voting rights.

In a May 30 statement, the Justice Department called this new development "an unfortunate last-ditch effort" to derail the Supreme Court's decision.

Dale Ho, a lawyer from the American Civil Liberties Union who argued on behalf of the census challengers before the Supreme Court, sent the justices a letter May 30 about the new findings. He said the New York Immigration Coalition had filed a motion with a federal judge in New York over this new evidence saying it contradicts testimony by senior government officials and representations by government lawyers.

The government had asked the Supreme Court to rule on the census dispute by the end of June, so that it can finalize the census questionnaire and get the forms printed in time for distribution next year. During oral arguments, the majority of justices seemed in favor of the added question about U.S. citizenship.

Lawyers against the question stressed that it would prevent noncitizens from filling out the census and have a negative financial and political impact on communities with large immigrant populations.

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This argument also was raised in a friend-of-the-court brief filed by Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York and Catholic Charities of Brooklyn and Queens in New York. It said the added citizenship question would cause a "net differential undercount of people who live in noncitizen and Hispanic households," would result in a "drastic and unwarranted reduction in funding in states and cities with large populations of such persons," and also would impact social service agencies.

On the day of the oral arguments, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a statement by Bishop Frank Dewane of Venice, Florida, chairman of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, and Bishop Joe Vásquez of Austin, Texas, chairman of the Committee on Migration, on the importance of an accurate census count.

"The Catholic Church and other service providers rely on the national census to provide an accurate count in order to effectively serve those in need," said Dewane.

Vásquez said all people should be counted in the census, regardless of their citizenship, but he noted that "proposed questions regarding immigration status will obstruct accurate census estimates and ultimately harm immigrant families and the communities they live in."

The census is rooted in the text of the Constitution, which requires an "actual enumeration" of the population every 10 years. It determines federal funding for roads and schools, congressional districting and the number of congressional representatives.