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Court rules Trump can't exclude undocumented immigrants from Census after N.J., others sue

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A federal court ruled Thursday against President Donald Trump's plan to exclude undocumented immigrants from the process that decides how many representatives each state sends to Congress.

Although the U.S. Constitution says the number of Congressional representatives is based on the "whole number of persons in each State," Trump wrote in a July memorandum that he could define what a "whole person" was to punish states that "hobble Federal efforts to enforce the immigration laws."

That memorandum was an "unlawful exercise of the authority granted to the President," wrote all three U.S. District Court judges in the Southern District of New York. The judges also blocked federal officials from making any attempt to follow the order.

New Jersey and a coalition of other states had sued to block the plan. The federal government's census is ongoing, and its final numbers will determine billions in federal funding and the number of Congressional representatives each state gets for a decade.

"A Census of all persons residing in the United States is a cornerstone of American democracy," state Attorney General Gurbir Grewal said in a statement. "For years, the Trump administration has been trying to tamper with the count. We've defeated those efforts in court before, and today we scored another victory by blocking the latest attempt to undercount the populations of diverse states like New Jersey."

A Trump spokeswoman did not immediately respond to a request for comment, or say if they planned to appeal.