

Week of January 11, 2010



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The Importance of the 2010 Census

Every 10 years since the very first U.S. Census took place in 1790 under then-Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, the nation's population has been recounted. The first census, taken by horseback, counted 3.9 million Americans. In 2000 Census—reportedly the most accurate in history—281.4 million people were counted. Now that it is 2010, the government is preparing to count the population again.

The U.S. Constitution requires the government to complete a census every 10 years. This act, however, is about much more than counting people. The final tally is used to determine how approximately \$400 billion in federal funding will be split among the states for hospitals, job training centers, schools, senior centers, bridges and tunnels, and emergency services. Perhaps most important, census data is used to determine electoral votes and the number of seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives. In 2000, Utah missed out on a fourth Congressional seat by 857 people. Similarly, Missouri has a margin of 40 people per county in order to retain its ninth seat in the upcoming Census. Because Missouri is close to losing one of our nine Congressional seats, statewide participation in the census could not be more crucial this time around.

The U.S. Census forms will be mailed to households beginning in March 2010. When you receive your census form, all you need to do is answer 10 short questions and then mail back the form in the postage-paid envelope provided as soon as possible. If you do not mail the form back, you may receive a visit from a census taker, who will then ask you the questions from the form. Census takers will continue to collect census data from those who do not return their census forms through July.

By law, the U.S. Census Bureau must deliver population data to the President in December for reapportionment. Also by law, the bureau must complete delivery of

redistricting data to states by March 2011. After Missouri gets its redistricting information, the Missouri Legislature must draw and approve new Congressional districts during the 2011 regular session, or face a special session, for the 2012 Congressional races. In Missouri, Congressional redistricting is the responsibility of the Legislature. The task of redrawing the state's 34 Senatorial districts and 163 House districts is assigned to two bipartisan commissions appointed by the governor.

I was recently appointed to the [Senate Select Committee on Redistricting](#), which is charged with performing all duties necessary for the General Assembly to prepare for its role in the 2010 Census, including determining Congressional redistricting to reflect changes in shifting populations. The drawing of Congressional districts is a huge responsibility with potentially enormous repercussions if done incorrectly. Districts must be drawn as equally and fairly as possible to ensure that every Missourian's vote counts as it should.

In the 31st Senatorial District, it is especially important to get the word out about the census because of the large number of students and military personnel who live here. Without permanent addresses, it is difficult to track people down when it comes time to mail the census forms in March. We need to make sure every Missourian is accurately counted. I hope you will join me in doing our part to ensure the 2010 Census truly reflects our state's population and that Missourians are properly represented for the decade to come.

As always, please feel free to contact me or my staff with any questions or concerns at any time. We look forward to hearing your comments and suggestions and trying to answer any questions you may have. You can reach us by phone at 866-277-0882 (toll-free) or 573-751-2272, or by fax at 573-526-7381.

Senator David Pearce serves Bates, Cass, Johnson and Vernon counties in the 31st State Senatorial District.

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