

Week of March 29, 2010



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## Doing Our Part for the 2010 Census

The 2010 U.S. Census is well underway, with most households receiving their census forms by now. Many have even mailed them back, making Missouri's participation in the census so far exceed the national average.

The U.S. Census Bureau recently launched a website (<http://2010.census.gov/2010census/take10map>) that tracks participation rates in the 2010 Census by state, county and city. As of April 1, Missouri's participation rate was 55 percent compared with the national rate of 52 percent (in 2000, our state's rate of participation in the census was 74 percent, just slightly above the national rate of 72 percent). Right now, Missouri is falling in the middle of the pack with our participation rate, so it's critically important that we continue to get the word out. According to the Census Bureau's website, if 100 percent of households mailed back their forms, taxpayers would save \$1.5 billion dollars by eliminating the need for follow-up.

The 31<sup>st</sup> District continues to keep pace with the national participation rate, but we must persist in our efforts to educate residents about the importance of the census and why it matters that they fill out the form and mail it back. The participation rates (as of April 1) for our local counties are: Bates, 57 percent; Cass, 59 percent; Johnson, 55 percent; and Vernon, 56 percent. In our 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 can be difficult to track people. If we can get those numbers as close to 100 percent as possible in every Missouri county, we can ensure that our state receives its share of approximately \$400 billion in federal funding for economic development, schools, transportation infrastructure and health care.

Perhaps more importantly, census data is used to determine electoral votes and the

number of seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives. This is especially relevant to our state this year, because Missouri is close to losing a Congressional seat. The latest research shows that Missouri could retain or lose a seat by counting or missing less than one percent of the population, making statewide participation in the census absolutely vital.

Most households have already received their U.S. Census forms, which were mailed out during the month of March. National Census Day is April 1, which is when all census forms should ideally be mailed back. If you've received your form, all you need to do is answer 10 short questions and then mail it back 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. 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 legislative session in time for the 2012 Congressional races.

I serve on the [Senate Select Committee on Redistricting](#), which recently held its first meeting. The committee is charged with performing all duties necessary for the Legislature 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. Our main goal is to draw the districts as equally and fairly as possible to ensure that every Missourian's vote counts as it should.

As you can see, we need to make sure every Missourian is accurately counted. If you've already mailed back your form, thank you. If you haven't, I encourage you to do your part to make sure that the 2010 Census truly reflects our state's population.

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 31<sup>st</sup> State Senatorial District.*

#### Contact Information

**Capitol Office**  
State Capitol Building  
Room 419  
Jefferson City, MO 65101

**Website:**  
<http://www.senate.mo.gov/pearce>

**Phone Number:**  
866.277.0882 (toll-free)  
573.751.2272

**Fax:**  
573.526.7381