

Week of May 24, 2010



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Why the Census Matters

The United States is currently in the middle of its decennial census count, a constitutionally required task carried out since 1790. For Missouri, the outcome of the 2010 U.S. Census has particularly tremendous consequences, which is why it is crucial that every Missourian be counted to accurately reflect our state's true population.

The census, 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, infrastructure and emergency services. Even more importantly, census data determines the reapportionment and redistricting that establishes the number of both federal and state House and Senate seats—and unfortunately, Missouri is close to losing a Congressional seat. It's estimated that our state could retain or lose a seat by counting or missing less than one percent of the population, making statewide participation in the census absolutely essential.

The U.S. Census Bureau is tracking census participation rates by state, county and city via its website (<http://2010.census.gov/2010census/take10map>). As of April 27, the cut-off date for door-to-door non-response follow-up operations to begin, Missouri's participation rate was 73 percent compared with the national rate of 72 percent. Though it looks like Missouri is keeping pace with the nation, many of the rural and outstate areas are significantly underperforming the urban areas. This is why it's critically important that we continue to get the word out. If we keep posting the kind of participation rates we are currently seeing in rural communities, it will affect our representation.

Minnesota is among the top two states for mail participation, while Missouri is barely above the national average. What does Minnesota have to do with Missouri? According to census projections, Missouri gets the 435th Congressional seat, edging out Minnesota by 10,000 inhabitants. If Minnesota's census count is favorable relative to Missouri's, Minnesota could keep its seat in Congress—while we lose ours. We cannot let that happen

based on a low level of participation in the census.

We must persist in our efforts to count every resident of the 31st District. The participation rates for our local counties are: Bates, 66 percent; Cass, 79 percent; Johnson, 75 percent; and Vernon, 64 percent (as of April 27). 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 count people.

While the mailed portion of the census is complete, you still have an opportunity to participate. Census takers are now visiting non-responders to ask them the 10 questions from the mailed census form, and they will continue to collect census data through July.

If you have not yet responded to the census, you have two options. One, you can call the Kansas City regional office to complete a census form over the phone. The number is **1-866-872-6868**. Or two, you can call one of the regional centers to request to be placed on a list to receive a door-to-door visit from a census taker. The location and numbers of the closest regional centers are as follows:

- **Kansas City**, Pershing Square, Kansas City, MO 64108, phone: 816-977-2140
- **Odessa**, West US Highway 40, Odessa, MO 64076, phone: 816-565-4054

If we can get participation rates as close to 100 percent as possible in every Missouri county, we can ensure that our state receives its fair share of federal funding for critical programs and services. More importantly, we can ensure that Missourians are properly represented in government. If you've already mailed back your form, thank you very much for your participation. If you haven't, I encourage you to contact one of the offices above to do your part in making sure the 2010 Census truly reflects our state's population.



Senator Pearce uses a public access computer at the Harrisonville Branch of the Cass County Public Library.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact my office with your 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.

Contact Information

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