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A time of counting: “Eastern Washington will lose over \$30,000 for each person missed.”

It seems to be the time of counting. Counting the days until a self-quarantine is up; counting the number of new cases of Corona Virus in each state or region, counting cans of food, number of pills; it’s a steady and relentless march of numbers.

And yet, a different kind of counting is going on, behind the scenes, an invitation arriving in our mail, promoted by social media, billboards, and fliers. It is the Census count, and in this time of urgent and often dreadful counting, the Census might seem insignificant or even a quaint reminder of more normal times.

The Census is actually a critical look to the future, data that forms an arc for decision making for the next ten years. It is a point-in-time count of all of us living in America, a tally which supplies all levels of government and businesses with basic and aggregated demographic data. The 2020 Census dictates how voters get assembled into districts, how Americans get counted for distribution of federal and state funds, and how –when compared to the 2010 Census - a city has grown and might attract new businesses to that area.

The Census involves 10 questions for everyone living in the United States. Everyone includes citizens, non-citizens, babies, relatives and friends sharing quarters, those that have mailing addresses, and those that do not. These questions cover names, addresses, whether head of household rents or owns a home (or not), race, ethnicity, gender, and a listing of those living at the same residence.

This kind of counting is a huge task, and with Corona virus precautions prohibiting community events and assembly at many Census assistance centers, and with the U.S Office of Census withdrawing field operators until April 1st, notifying people about the importance of this counting seems an impossible task.

This is why Alex Panagotacos, coordinator of Spokane Complete Count, <https://www.spokanecensus.org> has moved on to Plan B, C, and D. Her Census partners across Spokane County come from nonprofit and business organizations using new and different channels to signal the importance of this count. The League of Women Voters of the Spokane Area is one partner; Alex has many more. Here is some of the work that is going on behind the scenes:

- Fliers on the importance of the census are being given to families relying on food distribution. It is fitting that food distribution by public schools to students, now schooling from home, should contain information on the census. A complete count of Spokane residents ensures that schools will receive funds in the future for all children eligible for free and reduced breakfasts and lunches.
- Businesses with reader boards are being asked to remind drivers about the April 1st census date. Some LWVSA members have been driving through parts of Spokane recording the locations of reader boards for businesses. Follow-up calls are being made to these businesses. Here is the connection of businesses to the Census: Through accurate census information, businesses decide locations to attract the most customers.
- Trusted messengers are reaching out through social media and phone calls to those in their community about the importance of the census. When certain populations do not get counted, they do not “exist” when federal and state support is needed. Here is Andy Joseph, Jr. sharing a story about the impact a Census undercount had on the Colville Confederated Tribes when they experienced an outbreak of the flu. A complete count is essential for public health response to pandemics like the one we are experiencing now. <https://youtu.be/vSPHVcnb7oM>

When the League of Women Voters members have a thorough understanding of any issue, they then move to a “Call to Action.” For the Census, this call to action is 1) open the letter coming from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2) complete the ten Census questions on line (<https://my2020census.gov>), 3) tell five people to do the same, and 4) contact Alex Panagotacos apanagotacos@innovia.org about how to inform others about the importance of this count.

The Census letters are coming; the deadline for the Census is coming; and everyone can be part of a count, which determines voting districts, distribution of federal and state funds, and business decisions for the next ten years.

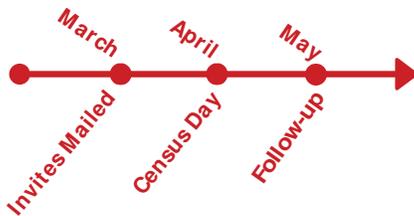
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WHAT EASTERN WASHINGTON NEEDS TO KNOW

HOW IT WORKS

Every 10 years, every household in America is surveyed on demographics such as race & age. The result is a beautiful portrait of America. This year, we'll be asked to respond online.



WHEN IT HAPPENS

In mid-March, households will receive the invitation to participate.

The online portal opens March 12.

April 1, 2020 is the official Census Day!

WHY IT MATTERS

Our representation in government and funding for programs like schools, fire stations and roads all depend on a complete Census count. Eastern Washington will lose over \$30,000 per person missed. That's funding that could have been used for after school programs, rural healthcare and more. We cannot afford to lose that!



HOW SAFE IT IS

It is illegal for the U.S. Census Bureau to release any information that identifies you individually. Your info cannot be shared with anyone—not with Homeland Security, not with your landlord...no one!

WHO COUNTS

Everyone living here as of April 1 counts whether you are a citizen born and raised in this town, or a recent immigrant.

You matter! Get Counted!



LEARN MORE AT SPOKANECENSUS.ORG

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