

2020 ISSUE PAPER: CENSUS

Position Statement

Summary: The League of Women Voters of the United States position on apportionment means that the census should count everyone, be transparent, easy and accessible, and the process should respect the diversity of our communities.

Background:

Every 10 years, the U.S. Census Bureau carries out a count, called a Census, of the nation's residents. The data collected is used for decisions and funding (over \$900B in federal money) that impact every community. The decisions include redistricting, enforcement of civil rights laws, education, infrastructure, medical insurance and much more. Voting districts and funding amounts are determined by the total number of people living in an area, not just the number of adults, voters or citizens. Whether all people are counted accurately in 2020 could make a dramatic difference in districts.

What is the 2020 Census?

The 2020 Census counts every person living in the 50 states, District of Columbia, and five U.S. territories. The count is mandated by the Constitution and conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, a nonpartisan government agency. The 2020 Census counts the population in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and five U.S. territories (Puerto Rico, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands). Each home will receive an invitation to respond to a short questionnaire—online, by phone, or by mail. This will mark the first time that you will be able to respond to the census online.

The 2020 Census is more than a count. It's an opportunity—to get involved and to help shape the future of your community.

Summary of Issues for the 2020 Legislative Session

1. Get counted where you live and sleep—official Census Day is April 1, 2020.
2. Many people in traditionally underrepresented communities do not know about the Census or why it is important. Reach out to immigrant, First Americans and communities of color and other underrepresented communities to make sure they have the facts.
3. On social media, share interesting facts, real-life stories, and how-to information to encourage your friends and family members to participate in the 2020 Census.

Issue Details for 2020

The Census has traditionally undercounted certain communities including racial minorities, lower income persons, undocumented immigrants, Native Americans, LGBTQ individuals, homeless persons, and those with severe distrust of the government. These are the very communities that need equal representation. An inaccurate count could risk further disenfranchisement. Although the citizenship question will NOT be on the Census, the battle over adding the question has caused thousands of people in our communities to fear the Census because they fear being targeted.

The 2020 Census is easy, safe and important.

Take Action

1. Get Counted

When you receive your notification, immediately fill out your own Census online, then spend the rest of the month helping others.

2. Spread the Word

Through the power of your social media channels, you can help shape the world around you. Share interesting facts, real-life stories, and how-to information to encourage your friends and family members to participate in the 2020 Census.

3. Partner

Census partners are vital to ensuring a complete and accurate count. As trusted voices in your communities, you play a key role in raising awareness. Leagues should look up the organizations that received State funding for Census outreach and partner with them. Please contact the Washington Census Alliance (<https://wacensusalliance.org/contact-the-alliance/>) a people of color led organization. Supporting the work on this alliance will strengthen our relationships with communities of color and is consistent with the LWVWA's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion goals.

4. Get Organized

Form a Complete Count Committees (CCC) or join an existing one to creating awareness in your communities. This can be as a few as 3 people or as many as you want. You can register with the Census Bureau if you want.

- Mobilize to get out information about the Census to traditionally undercounted people and communities.
- Utilize local knowledge, influence, and resources to educate communities and promote the census through targeted outreach efforts such as running forums, tabling at events, or volunteer efforts during the census at retirement homes, schools, libraries and churches.
- Provide a vehicle for coordinating and nurturing cooperative efforts between tribal, state, and local governments; communities; and the Census Bureau. Sign up with the Census Bureau (Los.Angeles.rcc.partnership@2020Census.gov) and/or reach out to people in government and community organization to be part of your committee.

Resources:

Census Bureau's website: <https://2020census.gov/en>

See the Census questions here:

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/technical-documentation/questionnaires/2020.html>

Washington State Census information:

<https://www.ofm.wa.gov/washington-data-research/population-demographics/decennial-census/2020-census-everyone-counts>

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