

Commentary: Census success will benefit Delaware citizens

Mar 25th, 2020 · Comments:

By Sue Claire Harper and Carol D. Jones

The federal government uses census data to distribute more than \$675 billion annually for public programs, including Medicaid, SNAP, Head Start, unemployment benefits, housing vouchers, programs for seniors and veterans with disabilities, school lunch programs, and disaster relief.

“The 2020 Census is your census, and its success depends on you,” explained Census Bureau Director Steven Dillingham. “It’s a once-in-a-decade chance to inform how billions of dollars in funding are allocated for critical public services like hospitals and health care clinics, schools and education programs, roads and bridges, and emergency response for the next 10 years.”



Sue Claire Harper

Although an estimated 5,000 Delawareans did not fill out the census form in 2010, Delaware has been getting approximately \$2,000 per counted resident per year. If those 5,000 had been counted in, roughly \$100 million more in federal funds might have come into Delaware over the past decade.

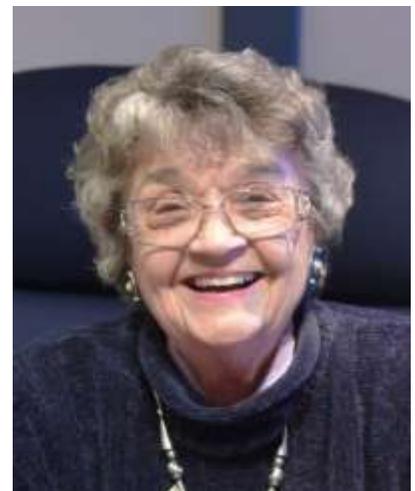
Bottom line, each person counted brings money in; each resident not counted represents money lost.

While some people may neglect to respond to the questionnaire because they don’t realize the importance of being counted, others may refuse

because of misinformation or rumors about privacy.

The fact is that the Census Bureau is bound by Title 13 of the U.S. Code to protect our personal information and keep it strictly confidential. Our responses are compiled with information from other homes to produce statistics, which never identify our homes or any person living there. Our answers are used only to produce statistics.

The law prevents the Census Bureau from sharing our information with law enforcement and our answers cannot be used to determine eligibility for government benefits. The law ensures that our private data is protected and that our answers cannot be used against us by any government agency or court and penalties for violating this law are severe.



Carol D. Jones

In fact, every Census Bureau employee takes an oath to protect our personal information for life.

The Census Bureau will *never* ask for:

- Your Social Security number
- Your bank or credit card account numbers
- Money or donations
- Anything on behalf of a political party
- Whether you are a citizen or not

If someone claiming to be from the Census Bureau asks for one of these things via email or phone, it's a scam. The Census Bureau urges everyone to be vigilant in fighting misinformation, disinformation, rumors, and scams. To report inaccurate or false information, send an email to rumors@census.gov.

An accurate count is important to everyone. Census statistics are not only used to determine the number of seats each state holds in the U.S. House of Representatives but also to decide how billions of dollars in federal funds will be allocated by state, local, and federal lawmakers every year for the next 10 years.

The 2020 Census will count everyone who lives in the U.S. as of April 1, 2020 (Census Day). Beginning in mid-March, households can respond online, by phone or by mail.

For complete and accurate information, go to www.census.gov.

Sue Claire Harper and Carol D. Jones are co-presidents of League of Women Voters of Delaware. Photos courtesy of Ross Kruglak.

The Opinion page is populated with letters from you, our readers. The Delaware State News was founded on and still is dedicated to the basic principle of civilly and respectfully sharing ideas to create a better community for us all. To submit a letter to the editor, visit the [Submit a Letter](#) page.