

TexarkanaMonthly



**EVERYONE NEEDS TO BE COUNTED
IN THEIR HOMETOWN**

BY KARA HUMPHREY

EVERY DECADE FOR THE LAST 230 YEARS,

the United States has counted its population. Doing so is a requirement spelled out by Article 1, Section 2 of the United States Constitution, which requires the participation of the general public. The census provides critical information used by lawmakers, teachers, business owners, and service providers to gauge the needs and well-being of our communities. Accuracy of the numbers provided by the census is paramount, because congressional representation and funding dispersed to our communities is determined by them.

Each year, billions of federal dollars are distributed to communities throughout the U.S. Funding for hospitals, fire departments, Medicaid, mental health grants and other critical services, all come from those resources and the results of the 2020 census will determine their allocation. This valuable data will assist business owners, who will use it to determine where to build new businesses, where to recruit workers and where markets would be the strongest for specific products or services.

Vashil Fernandez is the City of Texarkana's representative for the Complete Count Committee. This committee is comprised of a broad spectrum of government and community leaders from advocacy, education, business, healthcare, and elected officials. Their purpose is to develop and implement a 2020 Census awareness campaign, based

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Vashil Fernandez
Texarkana Complete County Committee





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Chief Communications Officer
Texarkana Independent School District (TISD)

upon their knowledge of the local community, to encourage response. According to Fernandez, “At the local level, the response rate of the census DOES affect the amount of funds that we can receive. The affected areas would include roads, healthcare, schools, housing, and other programs that contribute to the development of Texarkana.” He gave the following examples: “If the population is uncoun- ted, then Texarkana gets a smaller amount of funds for the



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Housing Authority of Texarkana, Texas (HATT)

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), than what are needed to support the total population that needs the assistance. The school lunch program for our four school districts is affected as well, when more students are attending schools, than the funds available to provide free or reduced lunches. Our Section Eight Housing Choice Voucher, that helps to provide housing for people with low-to-moderate income, would be affected as well, when we receive less vouchers than the amount of people in need.”

“The Census is vital to The Housing Authority of Texarkana, Texas and the communities that we serve,” said their Chief Operating Officer, Dr. Jackie Otto. Distributed funds help, “To strengthen and revitalize communities by assisting in the delivery of adequate and affordable housing, economic opportunity and a suitable living environment, providing supportive services, and by promoting community and economic development without discrimination.” She added, “Our residents rely on such programs to help improve their quality of life and/or to move them to a place of self-sufficiency. The resulting life enhancements for families are things which include having access to public transportation; having adequate medical care; obtaining full-time careers in

After gaining independence as a new nation, the need for a census of its inhabitants became a top priority. Setting up our new government was dependent on numbers obtained from it.

The newly formed House of Representatives would be made up of enough seats per state to represent its population. These numbers would also determine each state’s allotted portion of responsibility in paying for the war.

Strategically, the Founding Fathers knew the tendency would be for states to under-report numbers to avoid paying larger portions of the debt; however, they concluded that would be offset by their desire to increase their representation in Congress.

3.9 million people were counted in that first census, in 1790. By the 1900 census, that number had risen to 76.2 million. The census of the year 2000 was 281.4 million, and the most recent census in 2010 reported 308.7 million.

To read more about the history of the U.S. census you can visit <https://www.census.gov/history/pdf/cff4.pdf>.

fields such as nursing, education, or customer service; obtaining a college degree or work certification; improving their overall financial health; buying a home for the first time; and providing educational and financial opportunities for their children.” These services are crucial, and the dispersed funds are necessary to provide them. The census should not be taken lightly.

“For school districts, the census is a key component to federal funding which is distributed to the states for programs that impact schools, students and families,” said Tina Veal-Gooch, Chief Communications Officer for Texarkana Independent School District. “Funds received determine allocations of Title I grants to local educational agencies, the national school lunch and breakfast programs, special education grants, career and technical education grants, Title IV-E foster care programs, Section 8 housing assistance, Head Start programs and more.

Veal-Gooch added, “At present, only 54% have responded in this area which means there is still another 46% we need to respond. It’s important to note that personal information provided on the census form is protected by law and cannot be shared with anyone or any federal agency. The information cannot be used against you or to invade the privacy of you or any members of your family.”


Taking part in the 2020 census is easier than ever. For the first time, you can choose whether to submit your answers online, over

the phone, or through the mail. The self-response phase began March 12 and will end October 31. According to a June 30 press release on the 2020census.gov website, “Four out of ten households have responded.” As of that day, according to the U.S. Census Bureau,

they were “on track to conduct multiple follow-up activities.” Referring to citizens who have already completed census questionnaires, they also stated, “The goal is to make sure everyone in a household was counted, and to validate information provided.” To that end, “The Census Bureau began making follow-up calls to some households that have already completed the 2020 Census.” Census takers, in mid-July, will

also begin in-person interviews of “households that have yet to respond to the 2020 Census.”

While COVID-19 has presented many challenges to the efforts of in-person interviews, “All census takers will be trained on social distancing protocols. They will be issued personal protective equipment (PPE) and follow local guidelines for their use,” according to the website.

It is the responsibility of each Texarkana resident to take part in this year’s census. The entire community benefits from the information provided and it is the entire community that will suffer if the numbers are inaccurate or incomplete. Do your part, as quickly as possible, so that our community doesn’t miss out. Now is the time for Texarkana to stand up and be counted! 



If you are among those yet to provide your data, you are encouraged to do so as soon as possible. Texarkana doesn’t want to miss out on important funding opportunities that only improve the community.

LISTED BELOW ARE INSTRUCTIONS AND INFORMATION FROM 2020CENSUS.GOV, TO HELP GUIDE YOU:

- **FOR ONLINE SUBMISSION**, follow the link below and you will be prompted with directions for each step. <https://2020census.gov/en/ways-to-respond/responding-online.html>
- **FOR PHONE SUBMISSION**, dial 844-330-2020 to be guided through the process, or follow the link below. <https://2020census.gov/en/ways-to-respond/responding-by-phone.html>
- **FOR MAIL SUBMISSION**, visit the link below. <https://2020census.gov/en/ways-to-respond/responding-by-mail.html>.

Questionnaires were mailed, beginning in April, to homes who had not yet responded by phone or online.

Customer Representatives can be reached every day from 6 AM to 1 AM Central Time. The Census Bureau has made customer service lines available in 59 languages, along with printed materials and web pages. Non-English-speaking respondents can call Customer Service Representatives from 7 AM to 9 PM, Monday through Friday.