

From the Mayor

February 7, 2020

April Fools Day has a little more significance this year. The United States Census Bureau wants to know exactly where you reside on April 1, 2020. This is no joke. Every ten years, determining the exact number of residents and their exact location is of critical importance to everyone. It is serious business. The result of a Constitutional mandate, Thomas Jefferson directed the first decennial census in 1790.

Around the middle of March, you should receive a mailing from the U.S. Census Bureau inviting your household to complete the 2020 census questionnaire. For the first time ever, you will be able to do that online at [2020census.gov](https://2020census.gov). This online portal will be open for business in March and available in Spanish and eleven other non-English languages.

You will also be able to respond by phone or regular mail with a paper form. Up to three reminders will be sent to you by mail if your responses have not been received by the end of April. From June through July, Census Bureau workers will be going door to door to count those who did not respond.

The city will soon provide a link with specific information about the questionnaire on our website ([www.warsaw.in.gov](http://www.warsaw.in.gov)). The questions are simple. How many people live at your address on April 1, 2020? Is there anyone else staying at that address besides family? Do you own or rent? What is your telephone number? What is the name and age of those living with you?

I know that there could be some anxiety about sharing your private information. The idea that it could be used for motives other than the stated purpose is a common misconception.

Personal information gathered by the Census Bureau is safe, secure, and protected. Statistics are the only thing that can be disseminated. Under Titles 13 and 44 of the U.S. Code, information obtained in the census on individuals, households, or businesses cannot be released to any agency, including law enforcement, IRS, and others. No court of law can subpoena census responses nor can they be disclosed through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

One way to improve census participation is to employ Census Bureau workers who live in the communities and neighborhoods they will be counting. The Census Bureau is looking for workers to assist with the counts. I'm told these jobs are available to anyone over the age of 18 and pay well with flexible hours. You can sign up online at [2020Census.gov/jobs](https://2020Census.gov/jobs).

Why is an accurate census count important for our community? Many sources of funding are distributed locally based upon the final census count and cannot be

adjusted for ten years. This includes federal and state funding for roads, housing, law enforcement, fire protection, public assistance, disaster relief, etc.

It has been estimated that for every individual counted, \$2,700 per year of federal and state funding is realized. Each individual that is missed by the census count could have a \$27,000 negative funding impact until the next ten-year census opportunity.

Additional ways that accurate census data affects us locally is the drawing of federal, state, and local legislative districts. Undercounting could result in loss of congressional or state representation. Planning for economic development, logistics, land-use, and health care services also depend on accurate local counts.

We will continue to talk about the 2020 census in next month's column. In the meantime, become familiar with the information on the US Census Bureau website.