

August 28, 2020

Letter to the Editor

You Can Help Save Millions of Dollars for Calvert County

The US Census Bureau's recent decision to shorten the time to participate in the 2020 Census from October 31 to September 30 created an urgency to submit completed forms. County residents need to do all we can to ensure everyone has completed forms online, through mail or phone by September 30. Otherwise, our County loses millions of dollars.

As a Census Partner, All Saints' Episcopal Church urges everyone in Calvert County who has not submitted the Census form to do so NOW. We also urge other churches, organizations and Census Partners to do all you can to help identify those who have not submitted the forms and help them to do so.

As of August 9, Calvert County had a 71.8% response rate; north county doing better than Prince Frederick and south; Solomons trailing the most. In 2010, Calvert County had an 80% final response rate. We must do better this time. For every person not counted, Calvert County loses \$18,250 over 10 years. In 2018, the estimated population was 92,000. If 80% respond this time, we will miss 18,400 people. Calvert will lose \$18,250 for each person. Do the math. That is a loss of millions of dollars yearly.

Groups historically undercounted include children under 5, immigrants, 18-24 age group, people with disabilities, seniors, veterans, and non-English speakers. The simple fact is that everyone is hurt unless we count the full spectrum of our residents.

Some unfounded reasons people do not complete the form include:

- It is only for citizens. Not true. The Census goal is to count EVERYONE living in the US. No immigration questions on form.
- Others think it makes no difference. Not true. Critical decisions are based upon the data, including the amount of federal funding for County needs, such as new schools, clinics, emergency services, firefighters, roads and family services, like WIC, Medicaid and many others, as well as federal and state legislative districts. Businesses use it to determine where to locate and what goods and services to offer.
- People fear the information can be used against them. Not true. Federal law prevents Census data from being shared with law or immigration enforcement or to impact eligibility for government benefits.

Submitting completed Census forms is critically important, no risk and easy to do.

What can be done? Churches, civic groups and other organizations and Partners contact your members and distribution lists to ensure they have submitted their Census forms and encourage them to reach out to everyone they know to do likewise. Disseminate information about how to complete and submit them, why it is important and that there is no risk. Using your contacts, identify people who have not submitted their forms and assist them to do so. Use all sources available individually and organizationally: social media, e-mail, telephone, postal mail and

websites. Have sites, telephone or social media contacts where people can get information and assistance completing forms, with proper COVID precautions. Find creative ways to partner with others.

Community Census enumerators are going door-to-door, following health precautions. Please encourage anyone who is visited to open the door.

The Federal Census website (2020census.gov) has excellent information; my2020census.gov has downloadable forms to submit on-line. To fill out the form over the phone, call 844-330-2020; language assistance available. The Calvert County website (CalvertCountyMD.gov/census) has usable Census information, County Census leaders' contacts, and downloadable brochures and statements to get the word out.

The urgency is clear. For the sake of our Calvert County family, join us to get 100% participation in the 2020 Census. This effort is clearly non-partisan and requires a team effort.