

Hello,

Below is an op-ed piece written by Brent Kisling, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Department of Commerce. As we get closer to Census Day, we want to remind all Oklahomans of the importance of filling out their Census form and the impact it can have on their local communities.

We would appreciate you running this piece in your publication, and would encourage you to remind your readers of the Census in the coming weeks. Additional information can be found at www.OKLetsCount.org, or feel free to contact us for more information.

Thank you for your consideration.

Leslie Blair
Oklahoma Department of Commerce
405-815-5241
leslie.blair@okcommerce.gov

Dear Editor,

April 1, 2020, is Census Day in America.

This is a very important day for our country and it could – and should – be a huge day for Oklahoma.

As the Chair for Oklahoma's Complete Count Committee I am imploring you to please respond to the Census this year. The future of our communities depends on it.

In 2010, Oklahoma had the second lowest response rate of all the states in the US. And it was understandable. We didn't spend a lot of time or effort focused on it. We weren't looking to gain much from a big count, we undervalued what was lost with an undercount. We just let the day come and go ten years ago. We cannot allow that to happen again.

Here is why you should respond and be counted in 2020:

- Federal dollars are allocated to the states based on population more than any time before. Every person counted amounts to an estimated \$1,675 dollars in federal funding that comes to the state, per year. That means a family of 4 that goes uncounted is a loss of \$67,000 in federal funding over the next 10 years.
- Companies interested in starting up or expanding in Oklahoma look at census data when deciding if a community can sustain their operations and provide the workforce they

need. And workforce is the number one issue in business growth decisions today. With Oklahoma's numbers being based on the 2010 census, these numbers have been grossly underreported for 10 years.

- Federal representation is based on each state's population. Wouldn't it be great to have more Oklahoma common sense roaming the halls of Washington?
- State representation is based off of the census data. If you are concerned that your area of the state is underrepresented at the State Capitol, you should make sure your family and friends are responding.
- Not to sound like a high school government teacher, but it's our civic duty.

Over the past 12 months, the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, under the leadership of Governor Stitt, has led the nation in contributing addresses to the US Census Bureau in order to modernize their database for our state. If you live in our state, we want you to be counted and to be represented – and we have been working hard to ensure that everyone is reached.

Every one of you will get a post card in the mail in March asking you to respond to 9 questions about yourself and those living in your home. Please respond to this request and help us all in this effort.

If you have any questions about the census and our efforts in Oklahoma, please go to www.okletscount.org and download any information you need. We need everyone engaged because we all count.

OK, Let's Count!
Brent Kisling
Executive Director
Oklahoma Department of Commerce