

A few weeks ago, like many of you, I received a postcard in the mail asking me to go online or call to take part in the 2020 census. The card promised that doing my part for the census would be simple and take no more than 10 minutes. Since this was a function of the federal government, I had my doubts that it would be anything but simple; however, I went to my computer as requested and completed the census.

Happily, I learned that the promise is true! It was a short and simple process to take part in the 2020 census.

Since I now know the process is truly simple and easy, I want to strongly encourage everyone to take part in the 2020 census. As of when I write this, I am told that only 41% of the people in our area have responded to the census. This can be very problematic for local school districts and municipalities for the next 10 years.

The census numbers that are obtained every ten years are what drives Federal allocation of dollars until the census is taken again in another 10 years. Some examples of school programs which are impacted by the census include:

- Title I Grants for schools
- Special Education Grants
- Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)
- National School Lunch Program
- Head Start
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP & WIC)

Many of these programs are critical to the operations of schools and more importantly, are critical to those who need help.

In addition to the federal dollars that go to schools, the census numbers drive federal funding for transportation, hospitals many other programs operated by county and municipal governments which touch our lives on a daily basis. If our population is underrepresented in the census, local municipalities and governments will be forced to increase local taxes to make up for what would have been Federal dollars.

I have seen some projections that estimate that for every person not counted in the 2020 census in Erie County, local government bodies will collectively lose \$20,000 a year in potential federal subsidies for that person for the next 10 years. That's \$200,000 dollars lost for every person that is not counted.

The goal of the Census is to count every person living in your home on April 1 of this year. One of the most underrepresented groups when the census has been taken in the past, is our children under the age of five. For some reason, people often fail to report them. This becomes very problematic for schools since all those children will eventually be in our schools.

So, please, do your part to ensure that Erie County will be eligible for the maximum amount of federal funding possible in the next 10 years. There are two easy ways to complete the census: you can go online to my2020census.gov or you can call 1-844-330-2020 and answer the questions with your phone. Paper copies of the Census will also be mailed but, of course, it would be better to do it online or by phone.

If people fail to register by computer, phone, or paper, census workers will be sent out to knock on doors. That of course, is not possible now, but it would also be great if it were not necessary.

Thank you in advance for taking 10 minutes to ensure that our local school districts and municipalities receive their full allocations of federal funds for the next 10 years!