

## **Fill Out Census, Or MI Loses Fed Funding . . . To Ohio**

Michigan could lose federal funding. A congressional seat. Services for children, people of color and immigrants.

Those are among the things at risk if any state residents are missed in the 2020 Census count.

And, if any Michiganders don't show up in this year's count, "that federal funding that should come to Michigan will instead go to Ohio" and other states, said Rep. Julie **CALLEY** (R-Portland), who added, "We can't afford to let that happen."

The state today kicked off its Census campaign and it was billed as the "largest campaign in state history." The Legislature appropriated an "unprecedented" \$16 million to get the job done, according to the press release that accompanied the Capitol press conference today.

The campaign involves collaboration between the state -- with Kerry Ebersole **SINGH** serving as the state's census director -- the U.S. Census Bureau and the Michigan Nonprofit Association (MNA).

The MNA is getting \$6 million of the \$16 million appropriation to help them mobilize their nonprofit campaign, which will include a media campaign, Singh said.

As for the additional \$10 million added in a supplemental, 30% is going out in grants to local communities and another 50% going out to digital and paid media, another 10% to data and research and 10% to administrative costs.

There will be radio, TV and newspaper ads, direct mail and outdoor billboards, town halls and public forums, email, mobile and social media outreach and question-and-answer centers at libraries and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) offices around the state.

And that's not all: Lt. Gov. Garlin **GILCHRIST** II will be hitting the road for a series of Census town halls across the state, where he'll be joined by Attorney General Dana **NESSEL** and Secretary of State Jocelyn **BENSON**.

The state is also paying attention to its estimated 1.8 million people that will be harder to count, due to factors like places with high poverty, lower access to Internet or other issues that affect participation in the Census, according to the campaign.

Lansing City Clerk Chris **SWOPES** -- whose city is in one of the counties considered most at risk of being undercounted, said today, "Low income, African-American and immigrants are populations that we need to focus on."

In this current climate, Swopes said immigrants in particular have reservations, but he said, "Census data is locked up and not available to any other agency . . . for many years."

President Donald **TRUMP** has also entered the discussion, as two Census supporters suggested his presidency has made it tougher to counter reluctant citizen cooperation.

Former NAACP leader and now Assistant Secretary of State Heaster **WHEELER** said, "People are basically suspicious of government intervention into their private and lives (and) in this very divisive moment . . . Obviously, yes," the president is a factor.

Rep. Tyrone **CARTER** (D-Detroit) concurred in the President's role in all this.

"Yes. There is this issue. (People) are more likely to fill it out with someone they trust so that this is not going to Washington and our community is not bombarded with agents or anything like that," he said.

Wheeler also addressed concerns about Russian hacking of the Census data although he can't describe a reason why they would.

"I don't know if we have any expectation of privacy and security anymore, so I don't know the best answer but probably yes," they could gain access to the data, he said. "But that's not the highest priority. I want to find some of those Black Russians who are not likely to participate down in the neighborhood," he smiled.

Carter in town hall meetings confronts this community attitude by explaining that, "the people who are least likely to fill out the form usually need the resources the most." So he asked them, "work with me."

Community college students are being targeted as one of those subgroups of the population reluctant to send along information to the feds.

Mike **HANSEN**, president of the Michigan Community College Association, sits on the Census committee and said, "There are concerns about privacy and the government and having information that they feel like they don't want to disclose."

The press conference today included the likes of Gilchrist, Wheeler, Sens. Jim **STAMAS** (R-Midland) and Jim [**ANANICH**] (D-Flint) as well as Carter and Calley to explain why counting every Michigan resident is important.

Calley said 42% of the state's budget is derived from federal funding. Ananich said every person not counted in his hometown of Flint amounts to \$3,000 a person, per year, for the next 10 years that the city may not receive.

For residents ready to fill out the Census, people will begin receiving postcards in their mailboxes in March with the option of either completing the form online or filling it out by paper, Singh said.

The goal is to get at least 82% of people to reply to this round of the Census, which is the self-response period. In 2010, 78% of the state's population participated in the Census.

After April 30, the campaign will start going door-to-door from May through July.

The campaign has billed the actual Census form as "more convenient than ever" considering it can be taken by mail, in person, over the phone and online.

It also described the Census form as having nine questions that take roughly 10 minutes, or as the campaign's radio ad said, "In the time it takes you to do the dishes."