

## **Coronavirus Can't Stop Arkansas from Being Counted**

*We Must Ensure Communities of Color are Counted*

By Terri Hollingsworth

The coronavirus pandemic continues to cause devastation across our nation and in our own community of Pulaski County. As our level of uncertainty rises so too does the uncertainty of getting an accurate and representative count for the 2020 U.S. Census.

The impact of this anxiety, and the distractions that naturally come with it, will be exacerbated by obstacles such as underfunding and understaffing for the U.S. Census Bureau. Add in the understandable distrust of the government from immigrant and undocumented communities, as well as other Arkansans of color, and we could face a significant miscount.

We cannot afford to go uncounted. The information gathered through the census is used to allocate federal funding to our state for education, healthcare, roads and other essential public services. It also helps ensure fair political representation by providing data to redraw our congressional districts. If people of color in Arkansas are undercounted, our communities will receive fewer resources and less support in Washington, D.C.

That's why on April 1 for Census Day, I challenge all of us to take action to get our family, friends and fellow Arkansans counted. I count, and you count!

Fortunately completing the U.S. Census has never been easier. It now includes only nine questions and takes less than 10 minutes to complete. In fact, it took only seven minutes for me to do it online at [My2020Census.Gov](https://my2020census.gov). You can also reply by phone or by mail.

For many of us, our churches and houses of worship were places we gathered at least weekly. To protect congregants' health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic, many of our religious leaders are currently broadcasting services using technology and social media such Facebook Live, Zoom and other video platforms. I encourage these leaders, if they have not already done so, to make the case to their congregations about the importance of the census and how to be counted. Likewise, I urge all Arkansas news sources, community organizations and small businesses to use their online presences—whether through broadcasts, social media, websites or emails—to reaffirm the importance of the census and how participation is safe and secure.

April 1 is Census Day. On this day and in the weeks to come, I ask you to participate in the census and encourage your friends, family members and other Arkansans to visit [ARCounts.org](https://ARCounts.org). Together, we can help ensure Arkansas Counts.

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