



The League of Women Voters of Ohio Education Fund imPACT e-newsletter.

The purpose of these monthly emails is to provide League members and our partners with information on the most pressing reform issues affecting Ohioans today.

Want to learn more about the issues, how to vote confidently and how to connect with elected officials? Visit the imPACT website at www.ohioimpact.org for the latest information and resources to---Get Educated. . .Get Involved. . . and Get Results!

Redistricting and the Census: Why We Care

Redistricting and the 2010 Census are intertwined in three important ways:

- Census data are used to determine the size of each state's Congressional representation. (Ohio is likely to lose a seat in 2012, diminishing its influence in Washington.)
- Census data are the fodder for drawing redistricting maps. It is important that every person be counted in the census to insure equal representation.
- Census data are used to calculate the distribution of funds for needed public services such as schools, roads, health care etc...

A New York Times editorial of June 23 states that preparations for the 2010 census are in shambles. It cites problems with mismanagement in the federal Commerce Department, which oversees the census, and problems with underfunding. It goes on to say, "The quality of the nation's democracy depends on the census, because the numbers are used to decide the number of Congressional seats from each state and hence the number of votes each state has in the Electoral College." It adds that an inaccurate census invariably undercounts out-of-the-mainstream groups.

The "fear factor" is also at work in sabotaging an accurate count. Some people are reluctant to share any information with a government entity, and recent immigrants and other minorities may not understand the purpose of the census.

One way to counter these problems is to involve minorities and underrepresented groups in the census-taking process. Making an effort to have community representation will help to build trust and alleviate the apprehension. Local communities should be forming "Complete Count Committees" (CCC) now. These are teams of community leaders appointed by a mayor or high-ranking official to develop and implement a locally based census outreach and awareness campaign. Community-based organizations can also establish CCCs that reach out to their constituents.

Historically, the very same groups that are under-counted in the census are the same groups that tap in to social and public services. In order to get the resources into the right communities, the count is critical. The Census and Redistricting are important issues of representation of citizens and the ability to respond to their needs.

The League of Women Voters of Ohio continues to work toward a bipartisan redistricting process using nonpartisan criteria that is transparent to the public and with meaningful public involvement. To insure that every vote counts, we must first be sure that every person is counted.