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Contact: Erin Casey
P: 267-981-1855
E: ecasey@pavoice.org

Governor Creates Commission to Ensure Fair, Accurate Count in 2020 Census

HARRISBURG (September 14, 2018) – Keystone Counts commended Gov. Tom Wolf today for his leadership in establishing a new commission that will coordinate Pennsylvania’s involvement with the U.S. Census Bureau to ensure a fair and accurate count in 2020.

Every 10 years, the U.S. Constitution requires a count of all people living in the United States. The census not only ensures fair political representation but also determines the appropriation of more than \$589.7 billion in federal funds to states each year.

“What happens in this next census will have serious implications for every community in our commonwealth for the next 10 years,” said Erin Casey, executive director of Keystone Counts. “Ensuring the count is fair and accurate is absolutely essential. We are grateful to the governor for recognizing the importance of this census and for making it a top priority for his administration.”

The governor signed an [executive order](#) creating the Census 2020 Complete Count Commission, which will help the U.S. Census Bureau recruit Pennsylvanians to be census workers, educate the public about the importance of the census, develop partnerships with public and private sectors to achieve an accurate count, and create a strategy to reach hard-to-count populations.

The census is intended to be a complete count of everyone in the country, but historically there are hard-to-count populations --- children, immigrants, people of color, and low-income households --- that are more likely to be missed.

Rural populations are more difficult to count than urban areas because fewer rural residents return census forms sent by mail, and they are less likely to have Internet access at a time when the Census Bureau is increasingly relying on web-based tools for outreach.

Undercounting communities can lead to a decade of headaches and missed funding.

Funding derived by census data include program areas such as Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), highway planning and construction, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, Head Start/Early Start, and more. Pennsylvania currently receives more than \$26 billion annually through census-backed programs.

An undercount also could affect Pennsylvania’s congressional standing. The state easily could lose one or more representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives if the 2020 census does not result in a fair and accurate count.

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Keystone Counts is a nonpartisan coalition of advocacy groups, service providers, and community organizations joined together to build an education and outreach effort for a fair and accurate 2020 census. For more information, visit www.KeystoneCounts.org.