



NEWS

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SECRETARY GALVIN VISITS BIG E TO ENCOURAGE WESTERN MASS TO GET COUNTED IN 2020

Secretary William F. Galvin visited the Big E today to discuss his strategy to secure a full and accurate count in Western Massachusetts for the upcoming 2020 Federal Census. Galvin, who serves as the official State Census Liaison for Massachusetts, explained his concerns about a potential undercount of the region, which is facing the possibility of losing congressional representation and federal dollars.

“Western Massachusetts faces several hurdles in getting a full count in the 2020 Census,” Galvin said. “Of particular concern is the City of Springfield. During the last census, Springfield was on the cusp of losing millions in federal dollars if the official population of the city dipped below 150,000. Our estimates indicate that the city’s population is hovering just above that number, and I want to make sure everyone gets counted and Western Massachusetts is not shortchanged by the federal government.”

In the ten years since the last federal census, the population in Western Massachusetts has grown more slowly than in other parts of the Commonwealth. Further complicating matters, the response rate to the census is typically lower in the region than it is in the rest of the state, with some areas seeing more than 35% of households failing to respond.

A significant undercount of the population could result in the loss of a Congressional district for Massachusetts, which would also mean the loss of a vote in the Electoral College for the state.

“It is always difficult to get everyone to respond to the census, but this year it is more crucial than ever that we spread the word and make sure everyone gets themselves counted,” Galvin continued. “The hostile rhetoric toward immigrants in national politics has only made it harder to ask people to come forward and be counted, and Massachusetts has around 1 million residents who were born outside the United States.”

Another barrier to counting immigrants is language difficulties. Though the census is offered in several languages, households primarily speaking a language other



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than English are less likely to respond. More than half of households in Holyoke and 44% of households in Springfield speak Spanish as their primary language.

Galvin also noted that certain other factors increase the difficulty of getting every person in Western Massachusetts counted. Areas with higher vacancy rates, such as Berkshire County, are less likely to respond to the federal census, he said. Another concern is the student population in Hampshire County, as students may not realize that they should be responding to the census from their school address, where they spend most of the year and consume local resources.

Though Census Day is April 1, 2020, Massachusetts residents will begin receiving census notices in their mailboxes in mid-March. Residents will be able to respond online, by phone, or by mail

Additional information about the 2020 Census may be found at www.MA2020Census.org or by calling 1-833-MA1-2020.

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