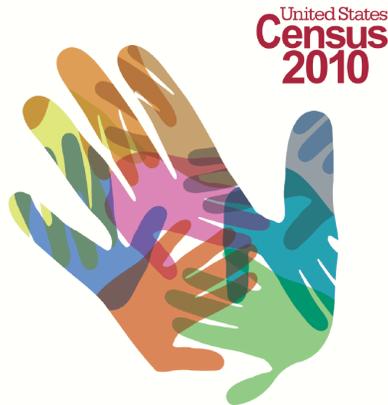


## Census Bureau Kicks Off Census 2010

By James Palma, AICP, Maryland Department of Planning's State Data Center

**T**he 2010 Census has finally arrived. Many readers are familiar with all of the work that has led up to this point: Updates of local addresses and legal boundaries, tracking new construction, and performing outreach to hard-to-count



### IT'S IN OUR HANDS

populations.

However, even though Census Day - the date forms are due - is April 1<sup>st</sup>, that doesn't mean that 2010 Census activities are finished.

Much needs to be done to ensure a proper count. The Census Bureau hopes to have received all Census forms back before April 1<sup>st</sup>. The Census Bureau mailed *advance letters* to all households receiving forms between March 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, and mailed the actual *Census questionnaires* between March 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. Forms were followed up with *reminder postcards*, which were mailed from March 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>. All of this preparation was focused on improving the response rate compared to the 2000 Census, which had a 67 percent response rate nationally, and a 69 percent response rate in Maryland.

Areas that have low response rates will receive *replacement questionnaires*, which will be mailed between April 1<sup>st</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. All households that have not returned Census forms by the end of

April will be visited by Census enumerators during the *Non-Response Follow-Up* program, which will run from May through July.

People who did not receive a form in the mail will be directed via the Census Bureau's extensive advertising program to visit a *Be Counted* site to get one. These sites will be located at participating places such as community centers, health clinics, convenience stores, and churches. People who need more assistance can visit a *Questionnaire Assistance Center (QAC)*, which will be staffed by sworn Census Bureau personnel. Both will be open between March 19<sup>th</sup> and April 19<sup>th</sup>. A complete list of *Be Counted* and *QAC* sites can be found at <http://census.maryland.gov/>. Census forms will only be mailed in English or Spanish. *QACs* will have forms available in five languages in addition to English and will also have descriptive Census materials available in nearly 60 languages. People will also have the ability to obtain multilingual assistance via telephone.

While households receive Census forms in March, people living in *group quarters* will be counted in April and May. This includes people living or staying in places such as military barracks, college residence halls, skilled nursing facilities, group homes and correctional facilities.

If you are interested in the response rate for your community, the Census Bureau will be instituting the *Response Rate Feedback Program (RRFP)*, which will provide real-time data on response rates by Census tract. As forms are received and scanned by the three data processing



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centers across the country, aggregate statistics by tract will be posted at <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/>. This data will allow local governments to track areas that might need more outreach to increase response rates. To view an interactive online map of areas that are considered hard-to-count in Maryland, visit [http://census.maryland.gov/S1\\_Outreach\\_map.shtml](http://census.maryland.gov/S1_Outreach_map.shtml).

For more information on the 2010 Decennial Census in Maryland, visit <http://census.maryland.gov/>. 

*A proper count of all residents is important to Maryland. In 2007, it was estimated that Maryland received an average of \$1,038 per person from Federal programs that depend on Census data to apportion funds. In theory, this means that every missed person costs Maryland more than \$1,000 per year.*