

## Maggie's Civics Corner

### Lesson #11 - The United States Census



#### Maggie says ...

*In these difficult times, as our nation and the world pull together, it is more important than ever to understand our role as a citizen.*

**Today's lesson is about THE UNITED STATES CENSUS.** One thing I love to do is count all my toys and bones. Counting helps me to keep track of everything and keeps me organized. Did you know the U.S. Constitution requires a **Census** to count all the

people that live in the continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii, and the five (5) U.S. territories – American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands? A census involves the recording of various details about individuals to obtain an official count or survey of the population. The U.S. conducts such a **Census** every 10 years to learn more about the demographics of its people. Every house in the U.S. and its territories receives an invitation to participate in the Census, which they may do so by responding to a short questionnaire online, by phone, or by mail.

**ABOUT THE U.S. CENSUS: Article I, Section 2** of the *U.S. Constitution* states: “Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States... according to their respective Numbers... The actual Enumeration shall be made within three years after the first meeting of the Congress of the United States and within every subsequent Term of ten Years.”

**Section 2** of the **14th Amendment** to the Constitution states that “respective Numbers” of the “several States” shall be determined by counting the whole number of persons in each state and territory. The first United States Census was taken in 1790 shortly after the American Revolution and has continued every 10 years since then. The last U.S. Census was conducted in 2020.

Filling out the Census is fast and easy. The questions are simple. For example, the Census asks how many people live in your home, whether you rent or own the home in which you live, and the names, sex, birth dates, and relations of everyone who lives in the home.

The U.S. Census serves an important role in helping the government operate. The information obtained through the Census every 10 years helps the government in two major ways:

1. Enables legislators to determine how they will allocate billions of dollars in federal funding to things like hospitals, fire departments, schools, and roads in states and communities throughout the U.S. and its territories. (This federal funding comes from taxes paid by U.S. citizens.)
2. Provides information needed to determine the number of seats each state will have in the U.S. House of Representatives, as well as to draw congressional and legislative districts.

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Because the **U.S. Census** is so important to the functioning of our government, it is critical for the government to have a complete and accurate count of all people living within our borders. And it is required by law that all households respond to the U.S. Census.

**Activity:** Let's do a U.S. Census check! Talk to your family about what you have learned about the U.S. Census and the different functions it serves. Make sure to explain the two major ways that an accurate Census helps the government to operate. Ask your family if someone from your household filled out the 2020 U.S. Census. If they didn't participate in the last Census, be sure to get them to participate in 2030 when the count is done again.

**Civics Resources:** The 2020 Census was the 24th census in U.S. history and represented the first time that all households were invited to respond to the census online. Click on the following link to see the 2020 [U.S. Census](#) results and examine/analyze the data to learn more about the plans for the 2030 U.S. Census.