

'LET YOUR VOICES BE HEARD'

It's vital for veterans to participate in the Census; their benefits and services depend on it

BY ALLEN PIERLEONI

The U.S. Census Bureau has something to say to the nation's veteran community: "Think of the 2020 Census as a mission-critical roll call to make your numbers known. Veterans benefit directly when their communities are counted correctly. Tell other veterans how the Census impacts services they rely on."

USAF senior master sergeant (retired) and veterans service officer Virginia A. Wimmer would like to emphasize that message. She's the deputy director of the San Joaquin County Veterans Service Office, which assists thousands of veterans and their family members each year.

"First and foremost, veterans should take part in the Census to be counted," Wimmer says. "It's important that our legislators know who we are, where we are and what we need, so they can appropriately allocate funding and resources to the communities where we live."

There are livelihoods at stake, Wimmer points out. Census data are used to guide the distribution of hundreds of billions of dollars in federal tax dollars, with veterans receiving a portion of that in a broad menu of earned benefits and quality-of-life dividends. In a real sense, the Cen-

sus ultimately funds veteran services, which include pension benefits and employment opportunities.

Pre-pandemic, Wimmer's office blanketed the county, spreading the word to veterans about the importance of Census participation.

It hosted benefits fairs and employment fairs, had a presence at veterans events at VFW and American Legion posts, and visited college and university campuses. Now, with such outreach prohibited, it has turned largely to video and audio conferencing as well as posters.

"Veterans love to tell war stories," Wimmer says, "but now they need to start telling Census stories. I think more veterans would participate if they heard from a prominent veteran at the front of this. Getting (retired four-star general) Colin Powell as a spokesman would be nice."

If Wimmer could speak directly to the millions of veterans in California, she would first assure them that the Census does not share personal information, a concern among many veterans, she says. Then she would urge, "Stand up, be counted and let your voices be heard." •



Virginia A. Wimmer, who served in the Air Force, now pilots veterans and their families to the services they need.

PHOTO COURTESY OF VIRGINIA A. WIMMER

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Virginia A. Wimmer
Deputy director, San Joaquin
County Veterans Service
Office



2020
CENSUS

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[COUNTONME2020.ORG](https://countonme2020.org)

844-330-2020

COMPLETE THE CENSUS NOW
AT [MY2020CENSUS.GOV](https://my2020census.gov)

MAKE A DIFFERENCE; GET COUNTED!

Just 10 minutes will impact the next 10 years for your community. Ten minutes — or less — is all it takes to complete the 2020 Census. Yet, thousands of California residents have not completed this simple form, either by mail, online or phone.

Due to the COVID pandemic, Census enumerators are not knocking on every door to seek out individuals not yet counted. Instead, it's more important than ever for residents to complete the Census questionnaire on their own. How?

If you still have your Census form, you can complete it and return it by mail. You also can complete it by phone at 844-330-2020 or online at my2020census.gov. To find out more, visit CountOnMe2020.org. If you haven't already completed the Census, don't wait. Federal officials are considering wrapping up the count as early as Sept. 30. An undercount could mean billions in lost

funding to California and its communities.

What's at stake? More than \$800 billion annually, distributed through 132 federal programs that are crucial to our neighborhoods including veterans, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Census data also is used to determine our state's representation in Congress and emergency responses to disasters and public health crises, such as the current pandemic.

Each person counted brings in at least \$1,000 in funding every year to their community until the next Census count, which will be in 2030.

Answers are confidential and are not shared with third-party agencies, including law enforcement, courts, employers or landlords. Under Title 13, Census workers are required to protect confidentiality by federal law. ●



CENSUS DATA = FUNDING

Here are just a few areas that will be touched by 2020 Census data:

- Veterans Services including health care
- Location and operation of veterans offices
- Veterans memorials and cemeteries
- Loan programs for veterans
- Education programs for veterans
- Placement of new hospitals and health clinics
- Number of doctors and other health providers needed in certain areas
- Distribution of vaccines and medicine
- Medicare Part B and Medicaid, affecting services and reimbursement rates
- Health insurance, affecting estimates of coverage

- Disability benefits, affecting payouts
- Distribution of transportation funds
- Construction and repair of highways and bridges
- Construction of affordable housing and future neighborhoods
- School construction and closures
- Title I education funding
- Unemployment benefits

Plus these special programs:

- Children's Health Insurance
- Child and Adult Care Food
- Rural Health Medical Assistance
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance
- Special Supplemental Nutrition for Women, Infants and Children programs



LEARN MORE:

COUNTONME2020.ORG

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