Local Officials and the 2020 Census
August 26, 2020

Why is the Census Important?
An accurate census count is critical to New York State’s representation in Congress and the appropriation of more than $675 billion in federal dollars for education, health care, roads, public works and other programs that are vital to your residents. Hard-to-count populations pose a risk of an undercount that could adversely impact political representation, federal funding and demographic statistics for New York State and its cities and villages.

Challenges Ahead – Stay Involved!
The challenges we face to get an accurate count for New York State are numerous. The current pandemic has led to lower response rates than in previous decades, exacerbating the difficulties of counting the estimated 4 million “Hard-to-Count” New York State residents – more than every state except Texas and California.

Furthermore, the U.S. Census Bureau is ending all counting efforts for the 2020 census on Sept. 30, a month sooner than previously announced, reducing time for enumerators to follow-up with households that have not responded. According to the Hard-to-Count map (see under “Resources” below), when follow-up door-knocking began on August 6 to count non-responding households in-person, New York State’s self-response rate was 5.7 points behind its final 2010 rate. That means a greater share of non-responding homes will need to be visited by census takers — an especially challenging task now that the Census Bureau has shortened the door-knocking timeframe by 4 weeks and, in some communities, there have been reports of staff reductions. It is important to note that individuals can fill out the form on their own so a census taker won’t need to knock on their door.

How Can I Help?
As local elected officials, you understand uniquely how this rollback will compound the challenge to count our community members in historically undercounted populations such as students, children, people experiencing homelessness and immigrants. Now, more than ever, we need leadership at the local level to help ensure a fair and accurate count for New Yorkers.

Many municipalities have Complete Count Committees which serve as the drivers of census outreach. Participating with, elevating the work of, and receiving regular updates from your local Complete Count Committee will ensure that your community identifies the best approaches for hard-to-count residents. If your region does not have a Complete Count Committee, your municipality can engage your community online by promoting Census outreach information directly from the U.S. Census which contains materials and content to elevate on your municipality’s websites and social media platforms. New York – specific information is also available on the Office of the State Comptroller’s website.

Resources
Resources are available for local communities through partnerships with New York State and the U.S. Census Bureau including:
- Cornell University’s Program on Applied Demographics provides tools and training to support New York’s 2020 Census efforts.
- The New York State Data Center offers answers to frequently asked technical questions.
- The 2020 Census Hard to Count Map (a collaboration between the CUNY Mapping Service at CUNY’s Graduate Center and the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights) and the Census Bureau’s Response Outreach Area Mapper (ROAM) can help provide you with characteristics of your community. These maps are useful for identifying census tracts that have higher proportions of hard-to-count populations.
- The Census Bureau also provides updates about its surveys through either text or email (register here).

Questions on the 2020 Census can be directed to NYCOM’s Legislative and Research Analyst David Bissember (David@nycom.org).

Don't miss tomorrow's webinar
Census 2020: Counting People Experiencing Homelessness
Thursday, August 27
11:00 a.m.
REGISTER HERE

Legislation Providing Local Budgetary Flexibility is Signed by the Governor

Legislation that NYCOM helped develop, which would provide budgetary flexibility for local governments (A.10492 Thiele / S.8417 Krueger), was signed into law yesterday, August 25 (Chapter 157 of the Laws of 2020).

Effective immediately, this law:

- permits municipalities to extend the rollover period, from 5 to 7 years, for bond anticipation notes issued between 2015 through 2021;

- authorizes local governments to use money from capital reserve funds to cover costs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, and further allows local governments to temporarily transfer money from other types of reserve funds for the same purpose, provided such reserve funds are fully reimbursed within a five-year period following the transfer; and

- extends the repayment time frame of inter-fund loan advances made for COVID-19 expenses from the end of the fiscal year in which the loan takes place to the end of the subsequent fiscal year.

NYCOM appreciates the efforts of New York State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli and his staff, as well as the bill sponsors, for helping us get this legislation enacted.

NYCOM Virtual Fall Training School - Register Today!
NYCOM is transforming this year’s Fall Training School into a first-class virtual event, September 22-24, with the educational sessions and unique networking opportunities you have come to expect from NYCOM.

While this could never fully compare with our in-person training events, we are making the most of the necessity for a virtual setting. We have a lot in store for the Virtual Fall Training School, and have worked with our conference partners at the Office of the State Comptroller, the NYS Association of City and Village Clerks, and the NYS Society of Municipal Finance Officers to put together an educational and fun program.

You can review the tentative agenda here, which includes nearly 40 sessions, as well the annual meetings of the Clerks Association and Finance Officers Society, a virtual exhibit hall, competitions, hospitality and much more.

You'll get all of this for a NYCOM member registration fee of $99 per official. So register today, check your wifi, clean your computer camera and get ready for Virtual Fall Training School!

REGISTER HERE