



## #WIGWednesdays

April 1, 2020

### “How to Utilize Available Tools to Ensure That a Full & Complete Census is Conducted in Spite of COVID-19”

#### Featuring:

Lucy Gettman, Executive Director, Women In Government

Haley Ashcom Miller, Partnership Manager, Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs at the U.S. Census Bureau

**Lucy Gettman:** Good morning, and Happy National Census Day! Welcome to our second WIG Wednesday session! I’m Lucy Gettman, Executive Director of Women in Government, and this is our second virtual policy roundtable.

For those of you who aren't familiar with Women In Government or for whom this is your first WIG Wednesday, Women In Government is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization by and for women state legislators, and our leadership is comprised exclusively of sitting women state legislators. We create networking opportunities, informational materials, and opportunities to collaborate on complex policy issues. Certainly the COVID-19 pandemic is about as complex a policy issue that we could possibly think of.

We have a fast and fabulous half hour ahead today. We're going to get started, and please use the chat box if you have a question to submit. We will take your questions a little later on in the program. And then, as I'm preparing to introduce the speaker, I welcome you to answer our poll which is in progress. Given everything that's happening around COVID-19, how many of those on this policy roundtable today have been able to complete their census already?

That is an amazing response! Almost 90% of us on the policy roundtable today have completed our census. What's especially wonderful about that is we have a wonderful resource speaker, our featured presenter Haley Miller.

Haley is the Partnership Manager of the Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs at the U.S. Census Bureau. In this role, Haley has worked diligently and tirelessly to utilize innovative solutions to the challenges that the 2020 census faces. She works primarily with elected officials and the national organizations that are comprised of elected officials. In addition, Haley Miller is truly a citizen of the world. She holds a BA in Global Affairs from George Mason University, an MA in Statecraft and National Security Affairs from the Institute of World Politics, and an MS in Psychology of Leadership from Pennsylvania State University. She resides in Washington, DC now, but she's originally from the Keystone State.

So Happy National Census Day, Haley! Thank you so much for being here to talk to us about what the U.S. Census Bureau is doing and what that means for state legislators and other political leaders. Haley, take it away. The floor is yours.

**Haley Ashcom Miller:** Hi everyone, thank you so much for joining today. And just like has already been said, Happy Census Day! I know this isn't the Census Day that we all had envisioned for ourselves, but



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we still are grateful for the partnership from Women In Government and all of the great work that you are doing around the country in your own jurisdictions. We are just so thankful for all of that.

I do want to preface that right now, as many of you are aware and hearing in the news across the board, things are changing rapidly. They're changing daily. There are a lot of different conversations and different planning that is happening kind of behind closed doors to see how we need to adjust things operationally speaking.

I do have to stick with the facts that I have today as things are changing so rapidly. I'd like to go over basically what has happened already in terms of our operations and where those resources are so that if you want to get live, real time updates from the Census Bureau, you're able to get that to your inbox. Of course, I would like to mention that Women In Government is a great partner of ours, and they do a great job of sharing all this information as well.

Sometimes I don't necessarily get information forwarded along until Monday or until later in the day to Lucy and the team, so if anyone wants to see those resources and get an email in their inbox on a Saturday or late at night on a Monday if we have things going out really rapidly – and we all understand the nature of the current situation is very rapid and ever changing - I would like to be able to point you in those directions.

I've pulled up my web browser here and I just want to basically show you all how easy we've made it for you to still be able to promote the census - to promote response of census - to those that live in your areas, to the organizations, or the various communities that you work with. We want to make it easy for you because we understand that with everything happening with COVID-19 that is taking the front of a lot of people's priorities, which is very understandable, and we thank you for all of the work that you're doing in your communities.

But we want to make sure that it's easy because this is constitutional. This is still mandated by law. We still need to count every single person in the country this year. We are really getting creative like Lucy had said in my introduction. I've been working around the country for a couple of years now trying to come up with innovative solutions to some of those challenges that we would face anyway for a census. I don't know that this widespread worldwide pandemic was something any of us could have foreseen when we were all planning for some of those challenges, so it's one of those times where we are rapidly trying to get innovative - work across different boundaries in this virtual space - to make sure that this is still very successful.

I've pulled up here as you can see [our basic 2020 Census page](#). All of you have probably seen this. A lot of these different PSAs and resources that show up on here you've probably been bombarded with if you pull up Google, if people have YouTube, or any different social media.

Again, if you have read one of many of the newsletters that you receive from different organizations you're a member of you definitely have seen some of this information. What I really want to point to is



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at the bottom, like I said, for real time emails if you want to get an email directly from the U.S. Census Bureau because we've made an update of our operations. We've had two postponements of operations to this point. The first was postponing in person operations until today, and then we most recently postponed operations until April 15<sup>th</sup>. I again cannot mention any speculations on if that's going to happen again, but the best thing that you can do is go ahead and put your email address in or follow us on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Instagram.

And of course, especially on social media and emails, anything that comes into your inbox, or you see on Facebook or Twitter or Instagram is 100% public. So that's something where it would take no longer than 15 to 30 seconds to re-forward an email to your communities or to share on social media. We want to make that very, very easy for you.

Next I'd like to quickly go to COVID-19 impact, and again, like I said, this is very, very ever changing, but we do have [a page dedicated on the 2020 site](#) that keeps all of the information housed of COVID-19 and the current state of things. The way to find this is actually just going on the main page and searching COVID-19. This will be the first result that pops up, and there is a news box of how we're monitoring COVID-19. There is the link that shows the operational adjustments and what that means. If you click on that there is the status of operations. You can see on here what the planned schedule was, the fact that we have now extended, and what the revised schedule is.

[Demonstrating website to viewers] So this would have been for self-response phase which is the timeframe where people can respond online, respond by phone, or towards the end of the month people that have not self-responded will start to receive that paper form.

Update leave, which is a different form of enumeration, is when for very rural areas or for those without standard mailing addresses, we would have had a Census employee leave a form on the property of that household. That is one of the ones that has been delayed.

This revised schedule is - and I will get a clarification - I believe that the update leave may have been postponed. But again, this is what is published on the site, so I might have had an incorrect date for that. Again, like I had said - I don't have time to go through every single one of these today - but it all lives right here and it's updated on a daily basis.

Basically what you can see is really the thing being impacted right now is the time frame of when we would have sent people to any sort of in person contact because of the CDC guidelines. That is what we are faced with avoiding at this point.

So one other resource I would like to point you to that went live a few weeks ago at this point is our [response rate map](#). This lives on [the 2020 census.gov site](#). So you can see either at the state, county, city, town and township if you have a larger town and township, by Congressional district or by tribal area. You can see how your area is doing for self-response. This is great if you want to think about how



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you're tailoring your outreach. If you see that you have a really high self-response rate at this time, you may think that some of your outreach can be tempered a bit, but if you see that you're having very low self-response rate - that not a ton of people have filled it out - that's definitely going to mean that you hopefully can ramp up some of your outreach or your promotion and your sharing.

I did have one question that came into my chat box if the census was mandatory and yes, I do apologize that I did not preface with that. But yes, the census is mandated by Section One Article Two of the U.S. Constitution that every single person residing in the United States be counted on a decennial basis which we have followed since 1790 every 10 years on the years zero. So the last enumeration was in 2010 and the newest enumeration is now in 2020.

The reason that we call April 1 Census Day - it's not the only day you can respond to census - we just use that as our reference day because for a lot of people in more complex situations, it's where you live and sleep most of the time or on April 1, so we need a reference day.

How often is the response rate map updated? The safe answer for that is every 48 hours. It kind of depends on the influx of self-response - if it's a very, very large day versus a maybe slower day just in terms of the systems. It can either speed up the process or slow it down, but on a safe note, I would say daily to every two days that is updated.

At this point I would like to open up for questions. Again, I would like to preface that this is an ever changing and fluid situation. I will answer things to the best of my knowledge, but I can't really share any speculations at this point. I'm sure a lot of the information you're receiving on your ends is changing too, so I do just ask for a little bit of flexibility with that.

**Lucy Gettman:** Wonderful, Haley. That was fantastic. Thank you so much.

First of all, thank you for sharing the national self-response rate is currently 38.4%. For those of us who were on at the very beginning of our virtual policy roundtable, we did a quick poll of those who had already logged in, and the self-response rate was 88%, so kudos to everybody on our virtual policy roundtable today for a great self-response rate.

The questions are continuing to come in on, so let me start with a couple of them. Haley, if you had to identify the biggest challenge to conducting a full and complete census given the current circumstances, what would it be?

**Haley Ashcom Miller:** Yeah, absolutely. Really what it lies with is certain operations that we do follow require in person contact. We have our update leave, our update enumerate for those communities that do not have a standard mailing address, which means that they, just like most people on this call, received their invitation to respond starting in March.



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We treat those properties - those households - differently because they might not have a P. O. Box or because they're highly rural or various reasons like that. So that's what's challenging in the current circumstance – that in following the CDC guidelines, person to person contact is of course not recommended by the CDC. So that is really what the challenges is. But we do have a new opportunity, given that same token, that we do have the online response and we do have the option to respond via phone. That is making at least the current challenge that we're facing...there's giving it more opportunities.

So really what our question now is okay, so we have certain members of X community, and of course, this is where local elected officials with the law enforcement - just local organizations and our local partners - can really be helpful. We have a household that because of their lack of a mailing address - kind of those things that we may take for granted being in a standard mailing area - how do we communicate to them now that they can still call on the telephone [to respond to the census?] Some of those places may still have broadband connectivity issues.

I hope that helps to kind of put into perspective some of the challenges.

**Lucy Gettman:** That was great. Haley. Now we have people continuing to join our virtual policy roundtable, so if you wouldn't mind going over the one sort of drop dead deadline for the census information to be presented to the President of the United States. Could you talk about that in terms of when that is but also why it's so important to gather the information as quickly and efficiently as possible? I'm sure there's a lot that has to happen to it from the time it's gathered to the time it goes to the White House.

**Haley Ashcom Miller:** Absolutely. Thanks for that question. So the very easy answer is that our data is due to the White House by December 31 of this year. That is the law - that is us following the law and guidelines - that we need to have those numbers to the president by the 31st of December.

So along that token that does not mean necessarily that we have until Christmas or the beginning of December to still get people to go ahead and fill out the census because there is still work on the tail end of actually receiving the data that we're able to. Our very smart – and this is where it kind of gets out of my hands as I'm more in the communications realm of Census - but our very wonderful statisticians and mathematicians are the ones that can tabulate that data. So there is a timeframe that's required in between that to make sure that that is done.

**Lucy Gettman:** And Haley, I'm sure most of the folks on the policy roundtable know many of the answers to this question, but again, why is gathering this data so important? What impact does that have on the federal funding that's directed to states and other kinds of support? Why is it so important for all of us to be counted?



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**Haley Ashcom Miller:** Absolutely. One of our main talking points is that basically the census is responsible for two really big things that mean a lot to a lot of people, power and money. Over \$700 billion in federal funding is allocated based on census - the census numbers - which is the data that we get every 10 years from the census.

Of course, we do have different population surveys - our American Community Survey and estimates that go out in between those 10 years - but in terms of the federal funding and then redistricting purposes that is based on the census numbers. So basically, how many seats you have and how much money you are receiving is based on the census numbers, and then states do also take that population information for redistricting purposes. Basically in 2021 that will start happening based on our numbers.

**Lucy Gettman:** So that's the sort of obvious consequence if we don't conduct a full of complete census. Are there any sort of individual consequences if for whatever reason an individual declines to respond to the census? Are there any consequences since it is something that's mandated?

**Haley Ashcom Miller:** So it is mandated by law, which means that every person in the U.S. is required to do so. Basically what that means in terms of right now - there isn't a specific list of consequences that we share publicly. We just share that that is required by law, and that your residents must do it.

We will send - and granted that is one of the challenges we're facing in the current situation of COVID-19 - our in person enumeration definitely is facing some challenges due to the social distancing policies, but after we do not receive self-response we send our enumerators door to door to make sure that we do get that information from households.

**Lucy Gettman:** The money and the power are sort of the obvious results of conducting the census, but I know that there's deep analysis and research into the data, and we find out interesting things about our country and all of us who live here over a number of years - over the next 10 years until the next census. Can you tell us a little about the research that's done sort of long term on the data to identify trends that either directly or indirectly could inform public policy at the state and local level?

**Haley Ashcom Miller:** Absolutely. Aside from the two large obvious [results] of power and money, census data across the board is used for so many different reasons. Any grants that your state or local government may be applying to - just various personal reasons for the residents of your area - it impacts economic development, it impacts population trends, so being able to get a full census very, very accurately is able to show any migration trends that are happening across the country.

But then very specifically to state and local governments which I work with mainly at the U.S. Census Bureau is our data and our numbers - the information we get from census - is indicative of basically your community. Any policymaker and any elected official is making policies and working on various state legislation or any sort of city law based on data, based on qualitative and quantitative data which



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the Census Bureau then provides. So ultimately, it helps all of you. You have very, very difficult and complex jobs - and I thank every elected official as much as I can from the bottom my heart for all the work that you do - but it informs the work that you do with our statistical data.

**Lucy Gettman:** So Haley, is there a question that we haven't asked you yet that you want to answer?

**Haley Ashcom Miller:** So at this point, I really do just want to share some time with you all today and continue sharing as much as I can that can be resources for you. Basically, I want your job to be easy - which I realize that that's a bit complex with no one's job being necessarily easy right now – but in terms of getting out the messaging, ensuring that people are up to date on our current operations, I want to point you to one more resource.

It's called [creativesfortheaccount.org](https://creativesfortheaccount.org), and if you go to the [gallery](#), we have been working with partners across the country to come up with different social media, different posters, different gifs or templates for Instagram or Facebook, and we actually had an online virtual - we call it a create-a-thon - last night. We had some great new social media items that were a result of that which are actually in direct response to COVID-19. One says three ways to complete your census without human contact or there are some more funny ones on here that still of course lead back to why the census is important. Some are a little bit more tugging at the heartstrings, but I do of course want to point you to those because those are great resources that you are then able to just go ahead and share.

They're very sensitive to the present time because we did notice that some of our marketing had groups of people walking side by side, which is not necessarily what most people's realities are right now, so we partnered with some great organizations that are helping to get out some different imaging for that.

**Lucy Gettman:** That's great. And are these images non-copyrighted?

**Haley Ashcom Miller:** That's exactly right. In the template we have all completely open source images that are available for these people to use so that there will be no copyright infringement if you use them. I will make sure that any of the different links and things I've spoken of today - although very easy to access - I'll make sure that I can send those over to the team at Women In Government so that they are just a click away for all the people attending today as well.

**Lucy Gettman:** Wonderful. Well, Haley, you've been incredibly gracious and generous with your time. We know that you have a lot of calls in your queue on National Census Day and that we need to let Haley move on to some of her other media and other conversations so well.

Haley, you've really let us know that now's the time that everybody on this policy roundtable can make a difference and ensure a full and complete census. Certainly Women In Government is up to the task, and we celebrate National Census Day with you.



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We'd love to collaborate with everybody not only on this web meeting, but also all women state legislators - all 2,100+ - the record most women state legislators we've ever had in our history.

Please follow us on social media, and we'll follow you. Let's work together to share how accessible the census can be and how important it is for our country, our states and our communities.

Women In Government is on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [LinkedIn](#). We have a great [SoundCloud](#) with awesome podcasts and public service announcements and other resources in there and who knows, maybe we'll be talking to you about YouTube very soon.

Please join us again! We have a whole lineup of WIG Wednesdays on topics related to state leaders and how we can be strong advocates for our districts and constituents during the current pandemic.

Next Wednesday on April 9<sup>th</sup> is “Nutrition for Vulnerable Populations during COVID-19” with Bob Blancato, Executive Director of the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services. Our program on April 15 will be talking about the “Biopharmaceutical Industry Battle against COVID-19: Progress, Updates, and Hope” with Mary Kosinski and Sharon Lamberton of PhRMA, and April 22 will have Clement Lewin from Sanofi-Pasteur talking about “Developing an Effective Vaccine for COVID-19,” and that is just the tip of the iceberg.

We've be keeping you engaged throughout April and probably most of May, because this topic of COVID-19 is one of the most challenging and comprehensive policy issues that we could possibly confront during our time, and we all need to be working on it together.

So with that in mind, I also want to let you know that the WIG team is available. You can reach out to us by phone, by email, or through our website. We are here to answer your questions. We welcome your feedback, your suggestions, and your questions to make sure that this amazing national organization by and for women state legislators can meet the needs of state leaders in the communities that you serve.

And since I think we're pretty close to the end of our time, I will say until we meet again - hopefully next week - thank you for being with us. Stay safe and well. See you soon.