



# LRO SNAPSHOT

A policy brief from the Legislative Research Office

## Nebraska's important role in the upcoming Census

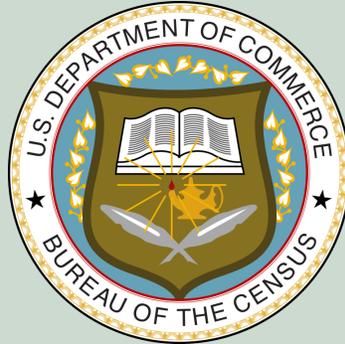
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The federal decennial census is one of the cornerstones of our political system. Established in the first few lines of the U.S. Constitution, the original census was conducted in 1790 and has occurred every 10 years since. It is used to draw electoral districts, allocate hundreds of billions in federal funds, and conduct a wide array of social science.

The 2020 Census is fast approaching. While April 1, 2020, is designated as Census Day, the actual counting will begin in January 2020. The groundwork for the 2020 Census has already been underway for nearly four years. The Legislative Research Office (LRO) is charged with working with the U.S. Census Bureau and Nebraska counties in preparation for the census. Additionally, the Census Bureau is establishing a state office in Lincoln for the 2020 Census and has begun hiring key personnel.

### 5 Phases of the 2020 Census

- **Phase 1— Block Boundary Suggestion Project.** This phase enables those at the state level to review existing block boundaries and to provide to the Census Bureau any data, geodatabases, and shapefiles reflecting updates and changes to those boundaries, that have occurred since the 2010 Census. This phase took place in 2017-2019.
- **Phase 2—Collection and Verification of Voting District Boundaries.** This phase involves the collection of voting district boundaries, updates to census blocks in each rural area, city, county, legislative district, and congressional district and other political subdivisions. The information is transmitted to the Census Bureau. The bureau uses this information to update its boundary information. The target date for completion of Phase 2 by the state is May 31, 2019.



*"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."*

- Article 1, section 2  
of the U.S. Constitution

The goal of Phase 1 and Phase 2 is to review, update, and change geographical boundaries, also known as census geography, so the Census Bureau has the most correct and current boundaries for purposes of conducting the 2020 Census.

- **Phase 3—Delivery of Data Files.** During Phase 3, the Census Bureau delivers data files to each state. The data files include the updated census geography and population count from the 2020 Census. The estimated release of Nebraska's data files is March 2021.
- **Phase 4—Collection of post-2020 Census Redistricting Plans.** Each state submits its new redistricting plans to the Census Bureau.
- **Phase 5—Evaluation of 2020 Census Redistricting.** Shortly after redistricting is completed, the Census Bureau conducts an evaluation of the process for purposes of improving the process for the next decade.

### Why is the census important?

The census is important to the State of Nebraska and its residents. Census information is used to:

- Apportion representation among the states;
- Distribute federal dollars to states;
- Draw congressional and state legislative districts and other political election districts;
- Inform planning decisions of federal, tribal, state, and local government; and
- Inform organizational decisions of businesses and nonprofits, such as where to locate, size of market, etc.

Based on census data, more than \$2.5 billion per year is distributed to Nebraska. According to the Census Bureau, that is a per capita allocation of \$1,342 per person.

