

## Telfair commissioners push importance of Census 2020

*'We have to make sure that we are counted ...'*

The 2020 Census is going on right now and Telfair County officials are reiterating just how important it is for everyone to be counted. Census results help determine how billions of dollars in federal funding flow into states and communities each year. Individuals may respond online, by phone, or by mail. This week, *The Enterprise* talked to two Telfair County commissioners about Census 2020 and its importance to Telfair County and the people who live here.

"I post on my social media (Facebook) each day about the census," said Dakkia Bradshaw, the Telfair County commissioner in charge of the local census committee. "I think it is imperative for everyone to make sure that they fill out their census count. People need to know that participating in Census 2020 will help our county so much. A lot of people I talk to don't really realize the importance of the census. The census helps with our school system, Title I, redistricting, roads, hospitals, and really just everything having to do with rural development you can think of. Also, filling out your census count has a big effect on business and industry coming into your community. It has a lot to do with housing and whether or not people want to come here and build housing."

"It doesn't matter if a person is here legally or illegally," continued Bradshaw. "This is one of the questions I was sure to ask about, and I discovered that all information is kept private. Even if they aren't citizens of the United States, they are to be counted. A person's information is kept confidential, and in fact, it is sealed for 72 years. So, people can rest assured that their information is safe."

Telfair Commission Board Chair Neal Stanley echoed the importance of everyone in Telfair doing their part to be counted in the 2020 Census.

"This is a very serious event that only occurs every 10 years, so we really need to take it seriously," said Stanley. "There is a whole lot that is at stake here, as far as federal and state funding for the county and the county's citizens. With the people and population we have here, the census has a direct impact on all of our political districting, redistricting for federal, state, county and even potentially city voting districts. Government aid and funding is always very important to small counties and cities, and now it's even more important than ever with current events like COVID-19. Each citizen could translate to as much as \$4,700 in federal money to our community. Whether you're counted or not counted you could stand to gain or lose that much."

Commissioner Bradshaw reported that she and her fellow committee members have been working hard to improve Telfair County's participation in the census.

"I really appreciate the diligence of the people on the census committee for working so hard," she said. "We've been working extremely hard trying to help get the word out about the census. We were at Peaches to Beaches before all of this COVID-19, and we gave out fans, fliers and information to spread the word on the importance of the census count."

Bradshaw updates her social media often with tips on taking the census in an effort to make the process as easy as possible.

"A lot of people get stuck when they go online to [2020census.gov](https://2020census.gov) and it asks for a code but you can still complete your census without a code," she advises. "You just scroll down and follow directions. I also did a video about this on my Facebook. Anyone can find me on Facebook for the latest about Census 2020 in Telfair County."

The commissioner said her most recent census-related challenge is making sure those with no access to the Internet also have a chance to be included in the census count.

“One of the things I’m working on now is trying to get some Internet hubs into the hard to reach areas of Telfair County,” she said. “I spoke to someone with Fair Count and he is supposed to be getting back with me about when Telfair can possibly get some of those Internet hubs. I know with COVID-19 it’s going to be kind of hard, but I figured maybe we could set up in a parking lot or a church. The Internet hubs would provide Internet for the people who don’t have access to the Internet to be able to go online and complete their 2020 Census. At these hubs, I would like to have someone from the census that will come down to take everyone’s information, and of course, since I’m over the committee, I would like to be there.”

“Please make sure you complete your 2020 Census,” said Commissioner Bradshaw. “It helps with everything in your community. It also benefits us as individuals as well. It is our responsibility. We have to make sure that we are counted and we want this for ourselves and our community.”

“Let’s do our part and make our voices heard,” added Commissioner Stanley. “Let’s be counted and be assured of getting our fair share. Remember, the better job you do in helping us with your response will allow us to continue to serve you better in the future. Ten years is a long time, so please don’t get left out!”

Individuals may participate in the 2020 Census by filling out and mailing in the census packet once it arrives; by phone with a call to (844) 330-2020 and answering the questionnaire; or by response online at <https://2020census.gov>.