

Population and the Senate

DIRECTIONS: Over time, changes in the nation's population and migration patterns have impacted the balance of power in the Senate and the House of Representatives. Look at the information compiled below and answer the questions that follow. Think about the following question as you study the chart: **how have changes in our population impacted representation in the federal government?**

| Census Year | State with Largest Population | State with Smallest Population | Difference Between Largest and Smallest State Population |
|-------------|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1920 | <i>New York</i> Population: 10,385,227 | <i>Nevada</i> Population: 77,405 | 10,307,822 |
| 1940 | <i>New York</i> Population: 13,479,142 | <i>Nevada</i> Population: 110,245 | 13,368,897 |
| 1960 | <i>New York</i> Population: 16,782,304 | <i>Alaska</i> Population: 226,167 | 16,556,128 |
| 1990 | <i>California</i> Population: 29,760,021 | <i>Wyoming</i> Population: 453,588 | 29,306,433 |
| *2010 | <i>California</i> Population: 37,341,989 | <i>Wyoming</i> Population: 568,300 | 36,773,689 |

United States. Dep. of Commerce. U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Populations of States and Counties of the United States 1790-1990*. Compiled and edited by Richard L. Forestall.

<https://www.census.gov/population/www/censusdata/PopulationofStatesandCountiesoftheUnitedStates1790-1990.pdf>

*U.S. Census Bureau. 2010 Census Brief: Congressional Appropriations. By Kristen d. Burnett. Issued November 2011.

<https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-08.pdf>

- 1) How has the difference in population from the most populous to the least populous state changed from 1920 to 2010?
- 2) How has the trend you described in number one impacted representation in the Senate for both large and small states? (Remember each state gets 2 votes regardless of population size)
- 3) How does this trend impact or relate to the arguments made in *Federalist Paper #51*? Think about representation in the Senate and the presidency. Recall that the United States votes for the president indirectly through the Electoral College. Each state's allotment of electors is equal to their number of senators and members of the House of Representatives.
- 4) What does this mean for the importance of the census and reapportionment in the House of Representatives for states with large populations?