



# California Complete Count Committee Meeting Minutes September 1, 2020



**Date:** September 1, 2020

**Time:** 10:00 am – 12:30 pm

**Location:** Virtual: Via Webinar and Facebook Live

## Members Present:

- **Committee Chair Alex Padilla**, Secretary of State
- **Gita Amar**, PMK BNC
- **Tho Vinh Banh**, Disability Rights California
- **Miguel Bustos**, Center for Social Justice, GLIDE SF
- **Carolyn Coleman**, League of California Cities
- **Kathleen Domingo**, Archdiocese of Los Angeles
- **Amy Fairweather**, Swords to Plowshares' Institute for Veteran Policy
- **Loren Kaye**, California Chamber of Commerce
- **Jesus Martinez**, Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative
- **Gerald McIntyre**, Justice in Aging
- **Keisha Nzewi**, California Child Care Resource and Referral Network
- **Eloy Ortiz Oakley**, California Community Colleges
- **Tom Saenz**, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
- **Lee Salter**, McConnell Foundation
- **Susan Shain**, Swing Left San Francisco
- **Regina Brown Wilson**, California Black Media

## Members Absent:

- **Francis Guzman**, National Center for Youth Law
- **Nicholas Hatten**, San Joaquin Pride Center
- **Alma Hernandez**, Service Employees International Union CA State Council
- **Lisa Hershey**, Housing California
- **Marian Kaanon**, Stanislaus Community Foundation
- **Robert Smith**, Pala Band of Mission Indians
- **Christopher Wilson**, Alliance San Diego
- **Tom Wong**, University of California, San Diego

## California Complete Count Staff Present:

- **Laura Askins**, Committee Liaison
- **Kristine Beckley**, Legal Counsel
- **Martha Dominguez**, Deputy Director of External Affairs and Media Relations

- **Alicia Gallegos**, Office Technician
- **Jim Miller**, Operations Project Manager
- **Yumi Sera**, Deputy Director of Statewide Initiatives
- **Emilio Vaca**, Deputy Director, Outreach

#### **Government Operations Staff Present:**

- **Lizette Mata**, Deputy Secretary of State
- **Sarah Soto-Taylor**, Deputy Secretary of Census

#### **U.S. Census Bureau Staff Present:**

- **Linda Akers Smith**, Assistant Regional Manager for Los Angeles Region

#### **Handouts and Presentations:**

- September 1, 2020 Meeting Agenda
- September 1, 2020 Meeting PowerPoint Presentation
- June 30, 2020 Draft Meeting Minutes
- September 1, 2020 Interim Report to the Governor

## **1. Opening Procedures**

Chair Alex Padilla called the California Complete Count Committee (Committee) meeting to order at 10:04 am. A quorum was established with sixteen members present. Attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance, led by Member Tho Vinh Banh.

### **Opening Remarks**

Laura Askins, Committee Liaison, California Complete Count – Census 2020, offered instructions for online public participation. Public participants were provided multiple opportunities to make appropriate comments on any issue before the Committee: at the time the item was discussed, during the general comment period under agenda Item #7, and up to one day following the meeting. Written comment was submitted by the following modes: email to [info@census.ca.gov](mailto:info@census.ca.gov), by leaving a comment on the Facebook livestream, or by mail.

Chair Padilla noted the new, recently revised deadline for Census 2020 of September 30, 2020, one month earlier than the original closing date of October 31. He expressed appreciation for Committee members' commitment to convening for more than one year in anticipation of, and in preparation for, the

2020 Census. He acknowledged major national challenges that had the potential to impede or detract from Census 2020 programming, such as the global pandemic, social justice movements, and political controversies. As of this day, 67.2% of California households have responded to the census. A strong effort is needed in the last thirty days. He commended efforts of all project partners and persons working on the ground, responding to critical calls to action in support of a complete count.

### **Approval of the Minutes from June 30, 2020 meeting**

The bullet point on page 8 relating to Member Tho Vinh Banh's update on recent activities was amended as follows:

Member Tho Vinh Banh complimented California Foundation for Independent Living Centers and Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund for their efforts to message directly to the diverse disability community including through the Disability Counts 2020 website <https://disabilitycounts2020.org/>, which includes outreach materials in Spanish and American Sign Language (ASL), among others.

Meeting minutes from the June 30, 2020 meeting were adopted as amended. Fifteen members voted in favor and one member abstained.

## **2. Approval of the Committee's Interim Report to the Governor's Office**

Chair Padilla explained that the draft September 2020 Interim Report to the Governor's Office (Interim Report) was prepared per the outline discussed at the prior Committee meeting. The Interim Report includes input from individual Committee members on their focused efforts to engage, educate, and activate toward the 2020 Census.

A correction to Member Gita Amar's affiliation was made to Former Senior Director at PMK\*BNC. Members had no further comment. There was no public comment on the matter. The Interim Report was unanimously approved for finalization and transmission.

## **3. State Census Office Updates**

Sarah Soto-Taylor, Deputy Secretary, Government Operations Agency, commented that in recent months, outreach campaign tactics evolved quickly to meet the changing environment and address challenges described by Chair Padilla. She expressed gratitude to all census partners who remain flexible and

determined in their efforts and encouraging partners towards success in the last month of census outreach.

Ms. Soto-Taylor next provided the following self-response rate data, valid as of August 30, 2020:

- National Self-Response Rate (SRR): 64.9%
- California SRR: 67.2% (ranked 18<sup>th</sup>, including ties)
  - This is one percentage point from the final 2010 SRR
- Tract SRR averages:
  - 67.21 % statewide
  - 71.11 % in tracts with CA-HTC Index less than 57
  - 57.96 % in tracts with CA-HTC Index greater than or equal to 57
  - Est. 2.06 million – 2.40 million households in those tracts have self-responded

Thirty-two counties and 263 cities have met or exceeded the 2010 final self-response rate. Approximately 520 of the approximately 2,400 hardest-to-count census tracts have met or exceeded final 2010 SRR.

The State Census office recently allocated an additional \$8 million to partners to increase outreach efforts in the last few months of the campaign. These funds were distributed to 21 counties that have census tracts with the most significant self-response challenges and the highest estimated number of households that have not responded to the census. Funds are focused on language access, in-language engagement, and hyper-localized media outreach. The State offered all partners access to free personal protective equipment (PPE) to ensure compliance of in-field health and safety protocols. The State will also provide funding for additional media saturation as necessary.

Census Week of Action, September 7<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>, will include myriad virtual events, media interviews, sidewalk campaigns, increased phone banking, and other efforts. The aim is to reach at least 1.1 million households in approximately 1,100 census tracts through phone banking during this period. If respondents to phone banks reveal they have not yet taken the census, the respondent will be patched through directly to a U.S. Census Bureau (Census Bureau) enumerator to complete the census form.

#### Member Questions and Discussion:

- Chair Padilla asked about Los Angeles County's efforts to reach school children in light of schools maintaining distance learning due to Covid-19.

- Ms. Soto-Taylor responded that county Offices of Education, including Los Angeles, continue to promote census virtually, including information in back-to-school packets, emails, social media posts, etc. California Community Foundation (CCF) is working with hundreds of contractors to reach youth and families via non-traditional methods, such as messaging at food trucks and gasoline pumps.
- Member Tho Vin Banh thanked Ms. Soto-Taylor and the California Complete Count staff for their successes to-date, commenting that reaching many diverse populations across a large geography takes great effort and creativity. She further expressed thanks to all project partners, and folks working on behalf of a complete count.
- Member Amy Fairweather stated that recent California wildfires ravaging or threatening communities have caused displacement of many persons. She asked how this relocation of individuals is being addressed.
  - Ms. Soto-Taylor indicated that service-based enumeration is conducted for those experiencing housing issues. Furthermore, the State Census Office and contracted partner HomeBase are working with counties, other partners, and the Census Bureau to gather updated information on temporary housing locations, and locations where evacuations are occurring. Census-related messaging and outreach methods are adjusted to ensure sensitivity in this regard.
- Member Tom Saenz shared that on September 1<sup>st</sup>, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund filed a motion in Maryland Federal Court seeking to reverse the recent census deadline determination and uphold the original date of October 31<sup>st</sup>. At least two other motions have been filed to reverse the decision. He next asked Ms. Soto-Taylor to verify or discredit recent speculation that California plans to close census offices on September 16<sup>th</sup>.
  - Ms. Soto-Taylor reported that the official response from the Census Bureau is that the census concludes on September 30<sup>th</sup> and offices should close at that time.
- Member Jesus Martinez asked if California plans to file a similar lawsuit seeking to reverse the reduced enumeration period.
  - No response was provided.
- Member Martinez shared that in Region 6, several organizations canvassing in targeted neighborhoods report significant increases in response rates. He asked how much canvassing is occurring in other regions, and if it is similarly successful.
  - Ms. Soto-Taylor shared that partners are encouraged to conduct whatever outreach activities demonstrate the highest success rates in their particular communities. She noted that canvassing is occurring across the state and is working in many communities.

Public Comment (note: comments are excerpts from online chat submissions):

- A public member shared that the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU) has reached nearly 380,000 on- and off-campus students with census messaging.
- A public member from Newcomers Support and Development, a San Diego based non-profit, reported that Middle Eastern communities (speaking Arabic, Farsi, Dari, Kurdish, and Aramaic) in the area are receiving census advertisements that are not culturally understood. He offered to connect state census staff with additional community-based organizations in the area to ensure appropriate outreach is received by this community.
- A public member stated that the leadership of CCF and WeCountLA has been instrumental in continuing outreach efforts in Los Angeles County. They expressed immense appreciation for the efforts of school districts, nonprofits, and local governments for getting out the count. The Los Angeles Office of Education continues to partner with these organizations. Events include the LA County Census Chalk-A-Thon (inspired by Santa Cruz) concluding on September 7<sup>th</sup>, and a September 3<sup>rd</sup> Census Fill-A-Long with Univision 34 that includes a Facebook Live with teachers.

#### **4. Target Self-Response Rates**

Jim Miller, Operations Project Manager, California Complete Count – Census 2020, provided a more detailed review of SRR trends. He displayed two bar graphs of SRR day-to-day response from mid-May through August 31<sup>st</sup>. Graphs depict a notable increase in rate of response beginning in late-July, with trends continuing upward. He next reviewed SRR for each of the 10 regions, pointing out the following:

- Region 9 (Orange County) has the highest SRR of 74.7%
- Region 8 (Los Angeles County) has the lowest SRR of 62.4%
- Approximately 900 California tracts have an SRR in the bottom SRR quintile nationwide (52.2% or less)
- Approximately 45% of the census tracts in Los Angeles County have a SRR of 52.2% or less

California's SRR (67.2%) is currently 2.3% above the national average. This shows partners' and media campaign efforts have achieved gains, but the ultimate goal is to achieve 100% response.

Mr. Miller displayed several example self-response rate maps generated at the zip code level. SRR maps and other visualizations are available at [census.ca.gov](https://census.ca.gov) and in Statewide Outreach and Rapid Deployment (SwORD).

Member Questions and Discussion:

- Chair Padilla requested a brief overview on partners' adoption of SwORD and their opinions on its usefulness as a tool. He also asked if there are any upcoming events that should be advertised.
  - Mr. Miller responded that data uploaded by partners into SwORD indicates that events and activities are occurring daily, such as canvassing, virtual events, webinar discussions, etc. Some special events are planned during Census Week of Action. He believes SwORD has been a successful tool, indicating some partners access it daily.
- Chair Padilla asked if there is a demonstrable correlation of high SRR in areas where partners are more actively employing SwORD.
  - Mr. Miller has not conducted such an analysis.
- Member Banh asked if Mr. Miller has any insights as to why Los Angeles County is exhibiting low SRR, such as confidentiality concerns among residents?
  - Mr. Miller stated that while it is not known specifically, it is likely due to a compendium of factors including confidentiality concerns, Covid-19 challenges, political challenges, etc.
  - Emilio Vaca, Deputy Director of Outreach, added that there are specific census tracts in Los Angeles that have traditionally demonstrated high SRR with much lower rates this year. Outreach efforts at the launch of the census campaign targeted the hard-to-count tracts, but in this last month, efforts will be focused on these tracts with low response scores.
  - Member Martinez commented that in immigrant communities there remains widespread confusion on who should participate in the census. Many incorrectly believe only citizens should complete the form. Many also remain fearful of completing the form because of the Trump administration's anti-immigration policies.

Public Comment (note: comments are excerpts from online chat submissions):

- A public member working with Child360 shared how the organization is engaging with parents, caretakers, and child providers to ensure children 0-5 are counted. She provided a link to updated census postcards the organization developed. Updated postcards include messaging for both census and voter registration: <https://child360.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Census Postcard 08 2020 ENG SPN.pdf>
- A public member reflected on the unprecedented challenges faced during this census and commended all parties for their creativity and work accomplished. She expressed her opinion that one of the most

valuable tools developed is SwORD. Many counties, community-based organizations (CBOs) and state agencies could continue to use SwORD in their other ongoing outreach and engagement activities. She advocated for SwORD's continued funding following the completion of the census.

- o Ms. Soto-Taylor provided that SwORD may be relocated to another office within State government after census.

## **5. Campaign Call-to-Action**

Emilio Vaca, Deputy Director of Outreach, and Martha Dominguez, Deputy Director, External Affairs and Media Relations, California Complete Count – Census 2020, updated the Committee on outreach and media activities through the duration of the campaign. Ms. Dominguez presented what the Census Office labels an Integrated Grassroots Approach that aims to reach communities at a more personal and memorable level. Segments of hard-to-count communities are classified based on residents' values, attitudes, lifestyles, interests, and hobbies. Trusted messengers are then engaged within these key segments of communities. Efforts are made to generate a localized buzz about census (i.e., phone banking, text messaging, social, radio, canvassing), unconventional marketing tactics are used (i.e. placing advertising posters on sky billboards), and copious amounts of media engagement occur. New communication tools and resources have recently been made available to partners, including toolkits, the Get-Out-The-Count (GOTC) website, media support, creative assets, and collateral materials.

Mr. Vaca described partner outreach efforts for the next 30 days, including creation and distribution of materials, text/email/phone banking, virtual activities, social distancing, and in-person activities. Partners continue to amplify non-response follow up (NRFU) messaging through social media and earned media, radio, television, advertisements on transit buses, print, newspaper articles, videos in waiting rooms, video creation, social media and viral video challenges, billboards, public signage, e-trailer signs, press releases, press events and public service announcements.

Mr. Vaca next provided additional detail on the patch-through phone program. Persons who are reached via phone who have not yet completed their census form can be patched through directly to Census Bureau in-language enumerators to complete their form. Text messaging reinforcement is sent to cell phone numbers, and a second-day follow up phone call or text is issued to all phone numbers. There are approximately 84 state census staff conducting phone banking, and another 30 staff were just hired. Metrics for the August 20<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> period include a patch-through rate of 66.8% (5,131 persons elected to be

patched through, and 6,909 persons were undecided). For the next week, all phone banking efforts will be directed to Los Angeles County.

Ms. Dominguez reviewed key findings from the most recent message testing phase that concluded in August. Key take-aways are:

- There remains a need to assure people that personal information is secure and will not be shared with any other agency or entity.
- People continue to need support on actual completion of the census form.
- Covid-19 has impacted thinking in a positive manner: a complete census count would be beneficial for equitable allocation of resources to communities should another national health emergency occur in the future.
- Key motivators for completing the census include funding for children and family health care, affordable housing, mental health, and emergency services.

Presenters reviewed September Census Week of Action activities: each day has a different designated social theme, and several major events, themed media opportunities, and guerilla marketing tactics are planned. Additional information, new communication tools, and resources are available on the GOTC web page at [www.census.ca.gov/gotc](http://www.census.ca.gov/gotc). Materials have been updated to integrate Covid-19 messaging and to curb the spread of mis/dis information (for example, Instagram story posts are available describing what a census worker will never ask).

Member Questions and Discussion:

- Member Banh commented that she has not seen any outreach materials that directly state that if a person is an undocumented resident, yes, they do count. She recommends generating materials with this very clear and direct statement, and to immediately distribute such materials to Committee members for further dissemination. She also recommended that all materials include [my2020census.gov](http://my2020census.gov) and the associated phone number.
- Member Gita Amar proposed a mayoral challenge for the cities with the lowest SRR during Census Week of Action. She further suggested advertising at hiking trails, beaches, and farmers markets in communities previously considered easy-to-count. Lastly, she recommended having a team member from the Lakers or Clippers make a public statement encouraging census participation at their upcoming basketball game.

- Member Regina Brown Wilson asked about the African American community's response in the lowest SRR tracts.
  - Mr. Vaca responded that data analysis at the tract level has not been completed for demographic populations. He added that schools have conducted significant outreach to African American communities, and efforts lead by MyBlackCounts.org have been successful. Messaging continues to be refined to be more inclusive in these communities.
  - Mr. Miller said California's statewide average SRR for African American population is the highest in the nation.
- Member Martinez shared that a virtual convening of over 100 Central Valley representatives was held last month to increase localized coordination of efforts. At this convening, colleague Mignonne Pollard shared an insightful presentation regarding Stanislaus County School District's outreach efforts. He requested this presentation be uploaded to the partner portal website.

## **6. Update from U.S. Census Bureau on Enumeration Operations**

Linda Akers Smith, Assistant Regional Manager for Los Angeles Region U.S. Census Bureau, shared updates to the operational timeline, adjusted for the pandemic and the new September 30<sup>th</sup> census deadline:

- Update Leave operations for California were completed on July 10<sup>th</sup>.
- Non-response field operations took place during July and August.
- Group quarters enumeration were completed in August.
- Service based enumeration will take place September 22<sup>nd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>.

The Census Bureau was tasked to develop a plan to provide an apportionment count by the statutory deadline of December 31, 2020. This means achieving an acceptable level of accuracy and completeness, with a goal of resolving at least 99% of housing units in every state, comparable with previous censuses.

The Census Bureau is maintaining its original contact strategy for occupied housing units. It will not change field activities, including number of attempts to contact respondents. In most cases, census workers will make up to six attempts at each housing unit address to count possible residents. Ms. Akers Smith said that Census takers are trained to rigorously and universally follow Center for Disease Control recommendations to mitigate risk of Covid-19 transmission. The Census Bureau is increasing work hours of current enumerators and issuing incentives to keep staffing levels up.

She briefly spoke to enumeration response during natural disasters: a rapid response team provides instruction to enumerators to move or pause their work, keeping them away from dangerous/impacted areas. She lastly acknowledged that there can be challenging cases such as locked gates or refusals, and in these circumstances, the Census Bureau employs its top-performing enumerators to connect with these residents.

Currently, persons enumerated in California through NRFU total 18.8%. This number added to California's total SRR of 67.1% gives an estimated response rate summary of 85.9% for the state.

Member Questions and Discussion:

- Member Saenz asked for further illumination on the speculated September 16<sup>th</sup> census office closure date.
  - Ms. Akers Smith responded that NRFU will continue through September 30<sup>th</sup>. Certain offices may have chosen to accelerate completion of field work to end on the 16<sup>th</sup> in order to address potential data quality issues during the last two weeks of September. For example, there have been cases of enumerators indicating successful enumerations, but offices could not validate completion of forms.
- Member Banh indicated that enumeration training for deaf people may be inadequate and primarily focused on American Sign Language (ASL). Persons may need Mexican Sign Language (MSL) as well. She can be contacted directly for further MSL resources.
- Member Miguel Bustos shared his understanding that some enumerators are feeling pressure to close cases as part of NRFU. What accountability measures are in place to verify that cases that are closed out – by being declared vacant/unoccupied, non-residential, or nonexistent – are checked for accuracy? Furthermore, is six attempts to contact a resident mandated or suggested? Lastly, are enumerators leaving their job positions due to lack of work?
  - Ms. Akers Smith explained that vacant residents are confirmed by proxy or administrative records, or a single visit by an enumerator. Regarding the number of contact attempts, if four attempts are made, the case then goes on hold before being elevated to an advanced or high-performing enumerator. She noted the same enumerator does not make all the initial attempts, as enumerators do not hold their cases. Cases are reassigned to persons working different days/hours to maximize the possibility of making contact. Regarding census-worker retention, the lowest performing

enumerators are being released during these last weeks of concerted efforts.

- Member Brown Wilson shared her personal experience that while she completed her census form online on census day, she still received follow-up notices and had two enumerators come to her household. She encouraged the Census Bureau to look into and rectify such types of duplicative efforts in the future.

## **7. General Public Comment**

None.

## **8. Adjourn**

Chair Padilla acknowledged this to be the final Committee meeting of the 2020 Census effort, and expressed deep thanks to the Committee, staff, partners, and public members for their tremendous efforts over the last two years. He encouraged all parties to finish strong on September 30<sup>th</sup> in support of California's goal of a complete and accurate count.

All Committee members joined together to thank Chair Padilla for his leadership and to echo the Chair's sentiments of gratitude to all partners involved in this effort.

**The meeting was adjourned at 1:05 pm.**