Making Sense of the Census!

In 1980 the population of Montana, according to the US Census, was 786,690. At that time Montana had two of the 435 House. By the census of 2010 the population had increased to 990,898. The upcoming census of 2020 will prove to show that the population of Montana has now exceeded one million.

In 1984 I ran on the Republican ticket for the House of Representatives in the State of Montana. At that time Montana had two representatives in the US House, one in District 1 (the western part of the state), and one in District 2 (the eastern part of the state.) The population of Montana, at that time, was determined by the 1980 census. By the election of 1992 the latest census indicated that the population of Montana had increased by approximately 14,000 people, yet the state was reduced to one representative to cover the entire state. (It is important to note that Montana is the fourth largest state geographically in the union.)

How could that be? Our population increased, but we lost representation in the federal legislative body that is supposed to be closest to the people. The total number of representatives has changed over the years, but the problem today for Montana and six other states with smaller populations centers around the “magic number” 435.

That number was settled upon by Congress in 1911. That’s over one hundred years ago! Obviously, 435 has not always been the number used to determine the total members of Congress, but it became “chiseled in stone” through the “Permanent Apportionment Act of 1929.” Unfortunately, there has been no effort to raise the number even though the overall population of the United States has certainly increased since 1929.

So what’s the crux of the problem for states with smaller populations like Montana? When the population increase is greater than ours in other states, and that 435 number has to be divvied up throughout the entire country, we lose. The larger populated states get a greater percentage of the total number. And what has been the primary factor contributing to this population increase in certain states? You guessed it! The influx of illegal immigrants, who get included in the census, increase the number of representatives allotted to the states where they reside.

In 2017 the population in Montana rose to 1,050,493 but instead of receiving a second US House Representative, Montana's representation remained at one. There are six other states that currently have only one representative. They are Alaska, Delaware, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, and Vermont. All of these states have gained in overall population, but because the Census has been counting illegal aliens, the states that gained representatives were California, Texas, Florida and Arizona where illegals make up the greatest increase in population. California now has 53 House Representatives. In 1984 they had 45. Texas had 27 in 1984 and now has 36. Florida had 19 in 1984 and now has 27, and Arizona had 5 in 1984 and now has 9. The US Constitution guarantees every state at least one representative. It’s a good thing! Without that stipulation, Montana could end up without any representation in the US House considering the rapid growth of the illegal population in the United States.

From 1820 to 1950 the Census included a question regarding "citizenship." After 1950 the citizenship question was only asked on the long form, and the 2010 census eliminated the question entirely. (Let’s see...who was president in 2010?) If the 2020 Census counts illegals as it has since 1950, the invasion of illegals might again increase the number of representatives for states like California. This could remove representatives from even more states.

This issue not only affects the apportionment of federal dollars to all the states, it would result in changing the Electoral College votes. This is critical, as it could alter the outcome of every future presidential election and the stability of our country. Adding the Citizenship question to the Census could cause states like California to lose representation in the House. Eliminating the citizenship question could mean that larger populated states would gain even greater representation. Which do you prefer?

God bless and Happy Easter,
Gary and Joan