

Mayor: Toledoans must remember to fill out 2020 census

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BY SARAH ELMS / THE BLADE

While Ohioans are turning in their 2020 census forms at a rate higher than the national average, Toledoans are lagging, and federal officials have noticed.

Mayor Wade Kapszukiewicz said he received a phone call from U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross, whose office oversees the census, telling him Toledoans need to step it up.

“It was a stern message that Toledo is not doing a good job filling out the census. We should take this as a wakeup call that we need to do better,” Mr. Kapszukiewicz said, noting that he was surprised to receive a call from the secretary himself.

U.S. Census Bureau data show the national response rate of households that have filled out the census online, by mail, or by telephone was 59.3 percent as of May 14.

Ohio’s response rate is the seventh-highest at 64.5 percent, behind Washington, Nebraska, Michigan, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.

But Toledo’s response rate is lower than the national average, at 53.7 percent, the data show. Akron’s reporting rate is 58.9 percent; Cincinnati’s is 49.7 percent; Cleveland’s is 45 percent; Columbus’ is 55.6 percent; and Dayton’s is 47.8 percent.

Neighboring Bowling Green has a response rate of 62.8 percent; Perrysburg’s is 73.9 percent; and Sylvania’s is 73.8 percent.

Mr. Kapszukiewicz said getting a complete, accurate count of Toledo’s population is crucial when it comes to public funding. Nearly all funding tied to infrastructure, healthcare, and education that comes out of Washington or Columbus is tied to population, he said.

“This determines the amount of funding that we will get for the next 10 years. The census is something that comes around once a decade,” the mayor said. “This is about as important as it gets.”

He said noted that federal coronavirus aid money has been tied to population as well.

Mr. Kapszukiewicz said he knows filling out the census may seem like a chore, but he said without a complete, accurate count of the city’s households, Toledoans will be missing out on much-needed state and federal funding.

“If we do not do a better job filling out our census forms, we’ll be paying for it for the next decade,” he said. “The time is now to step up.”

Visit [census.gov](https://www.census.gov) for more information about the 2020 census.