

Know Your Rights & Responsibilities

Sergio Aristeo

BEFORE YOU READ: In a democracy, you have both rights and responsibilities. Discuss.

People Protested the Citizenship Question, and They Won!

With posters that said, “America needs a fair and accurate 2020 Census,” hundreds of people protested at the Supreme Court in Washington, DC, in June of 2019. They were protesting against the potential inclusion of the citizenship question in the 2020 census. Adding that question would have led to an undercount of noncitizens and minority residents. As a result, areas with more immigrants could have lost both representation and federal funding. Although the 2020 Census will not include the citizenship question, I still wonder how immigrants will feel about filling it out.

Title 13 Protects Our Privacy

There are many fears people might have, but the worst would be targeting undocumented immigrants for deportation. However, it is unlikely that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) could target immigrants using census data. According to census.gov, Title 13 of the U.S. Code protects our privacy and the confidentiality of the census. This is what it says:

- Private information is never published. It is against the law to disclose or publish any private information that identifies an individual, such as names, addresses, and phone numbers.
- The Census Bureau collects information about groups of people to produce statistics. For example, the census will be able to tell us what percentage of people own their homes or that the population of a certain city is on average younger than in 2010. Personal information cannot be used against respondents by any government agency or court.

- Census Bureau employees are sworn to protect confidentiality. People sworn to uphold Title 13 are legally required to maintain the confidentiality of your data. Every person with access to your data is sworn for life to protect your information and understands that the penalties for violating this law are applicable for a lifetime.

Violating the law is a serious federal crime. Anyone who violates this law will face severe penalties, including a federal prison sentence of up to five years, a fine of up to \$250,000, or both.

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In conclusion, we must participate in the 2020 census. I encourage you to know your rights as well as your responsibilities. It is your right to be counted, and it is your responsibility to demand compliance with laws that protect your privacy and confidentiality. Do not allow any misuse of information from the census! To maintain our democracy, we all must play an active role.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. According to the author, why did people protest the citizenship question?
2. How does Title 13 protect our privacy?
3. For some history on how the census has been misused in history (and how things are different now), read the article on pp. 12-13.

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