

OPINION**Ebel: In 2020, be counted**

Joe Ebel, Guest Columnist Published 6:03 p.m. ET Jan. 18, 2020

Your voice matters, stand up and be counted.

In 2020 there will be multiple opportunities to be counted to help inform policy and resource allocation decisions that will impact our community for years to come.

The biggest undertaking in 2020 is the U.S. Census. Census forms will be mailed to homes and census takers will be visiting residents across the county as part of a Constitutionally required count of residents that has been done once every 10 years since 1790. The Census results determine how many seats in Congress each state gets and helps determine how billions of dollars in federal funding flow into states and communities each year. This data also is used by state and local governments to determine the priorities in communities across Ohio and spending for everything from roads and schools to community grants and public health funding.

Also happening in Licking County in January, the Licking County Health Department, Mental Health and Recovery for Licking and Knox Counties, and the Licking County Community Health Improvement Committee will be sending out Community Health Assessment (CHA) questionnaires to 1,000 randomly selected households. These confidential surveys help us determine the health status and needs of Licking County residents. Everything from the rate of tobacco use, to barriers in accessing health care, and even breast and colon cancer screening rates, are determined by the results of the CHA survey. This data is used to make strategic decisions about local public health system programs, priorities, and funding for the next three years.

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The Licking County Task Force on Homelessness is conducting a brief online survey to help the Task Force on Homelessness understand the housing and service needs for individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. They emphasize that all community voices are needed. You can take their survey [here](https://www.snapsurveys.com/wh/s.asp?k=157531712689) (<https://www.snapsurveys.com/wh/s.asp?k=157531712689>).

Finally, and probably the most important way to make your voice heard, is to vote! In the November 2019 election, only about 35% of registered voters voted. Even in presidential election years, only about 70% of Ohio voters turnout for the election.

Every voice, and vote, matters, but it is up to us to make our voices heard by participating in our local, state, and federal opportunities to provide input and to be counted.

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