

**Meeting Notes**  
**Making Federal Gov and Census Work for You**  
**Office of US Representative Ilhan Omar (MN-05)**  
**2020 Trans Equity Summit**  
**September 14, 3:05 – 4 pm**

Presenters: Nicky Leingang, Senior Community Representative, Office of US Representative Ilhan Omar; Biftu Bussa, Community Representative, Office of US Representative Ilhan Omar

**Federal Government overview**

- 3 branches of gov't
  - Legislative - 435 US Representatives, 100 US Senators
  - Executive – Presidential: executive orders; appointments; federal judges, commander in chief of military
  - Judicial – Supreme Court; US federal circuit court. Immigration court completely falls under the Department Of Justice, run previously by US Attorney General Jeff Sessions and now US Attorney General William Barr.

**Other Levels of government**

- City – statutory, either by state legal framework or by home rule charter city as structured through city charter, as is the case in Minneapolis. Provide nuts and bolts of everyday life, e.g., police force, fire department, EMS, street maintenance, sewer and water, parks and recreation, optional: e.g. in MN, municipally run liquor store. Many actions are greatly limited by State law.
- County – more technical rather than legislative. Determines how a social program is rolled out and how easy it is to access and how transparent it will be. County functions include tax administration, property tax assessments, law enforcement (sheriff, prosecutor, courts), elections, record keeping, transportation, planning and zoning, health and human services, among other important functions.
- State – House of Representatives = 2 year terms; and Senate = 4 year terms. Raise funds through taxes, including income tax. Sets laws for all lower levels of government through State Constitution. Local Government Aid and grant funding of special projects; bonding is used to lend to local government and it's paid back annually. Permitting of federal laws and environmental permits. Can do anything not explicitly binding by Constitution.
- Tribes – sovereign nations, structured through treaties, not subject to the other levels of government. 11 tribes in MN: 7 Anishinaabe; 4 Dakota. Historically, our government has ignored treaties. A recent supreme court decision was made to uphold treaties as legally binding.
- Regional and district bodies: created with a specific purpose, not wide-ranging authority. Met Council is a regional body here in MN with authority in regional transportation, housing, sewer; policy making for strategic growth; Metro Transit. Other regional bodies include: school districts (Minneapolis Public Schools), park districts

(Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board), conservation districts, mosquito control district, watershed districts.

### How to make your voice heard

- Find out which government jurisdiction has the authority for your issue(s)
- Determine if the issue is legislative, administrative, regulatory or judicial
- Find out who represents you in government
- Contact your government official. Everyone can do this; don't need to be a citizen. Leave your contact info, stated clearly. Ask to speak with the staff member who works on that particular issue. Note: a sudden increase in calls elevates the issue and can compel a government official to act.
- [Report issues to City of Minneapolis](#) 311 by phone (dial 311 or 612-673-3000) or [using the app](#).
- Submit comments during rulemaking or public hearings.
- Report permit violations directly to the agency or oversight agency (e.g. Ombudsman or Inspector General are independent oversight offices)
- File a discrimination complaint with civil rights agencies: [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#), [MN Department of Human Rights](#), [City of Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights](#) (also police misconduct, minimum wage, sick and safe time) and [Police Conduct Oversight Commission](#), etc.
- If you live in District 05, contact US Representative Ilhan Omar for help with a government agency or other issues, such as immigration application assistance and questions regarding federal benefits. Contact: 612-333-1272 or email [MN05.info@mail.house.gov](mailto:MN05.info@mail.house.gov).

### 2020 Census overview

- Informs the reapportionment process (number of US Representatives/congressional districts)
- Everyone must complete, not just citizens
- Every year, MN receives \$15 billion from our federal government based on census responses
- Impact
  - Education – school lunch program, Head Start
  - Employment – career pathways, unemployment
  - SNAP, Medicaid, WIC
  - Section 8 housing
  - Transportation – highway planning and construction
  - Other important areas
- Who is undercounted?
  - Children under 5 years old
  - Renters
  - Young adults
  - People experiencing homelessness
  - Communities of color
  - Low income households
  - Native/Indigenous people
  - Non-English speakers
  - Undocumented immigrants
  - Persons with developmental or physical disabilities

- Timeline
  - Self-response ends Sep. 30
  - Respond online at [my2020census.gov](https://my2020census.gov), or by phone at 844-330-2020, or mail the paper form received in US postal mail. One form per household.
  - Non-response follow up by census workers, Aug. 9 – Sep. 30
- Delivery of apportionment data, by statutory deadline of Dec. 31, 2020
- Delivery of redistricting data, by March 30, 2021
  - 8 congressional districts in MN. We're at risk of losing one if we have significant undercounting. This means less funding for critical services.
- [2020 Census artwork](#) – Roxanne Anderson and Anna Meyer, Creative City Making artists
  - "Trans People Will Never Be Erased" image by Sophia Fesser
  - "We Count" image by Ricardo Levins Morales
  - Other artists: Stephani Booker (poem), Kevin Chaos Moore (video), City Council VP Andrea Jenkins (poem)
  - Celebrate the diversity in community