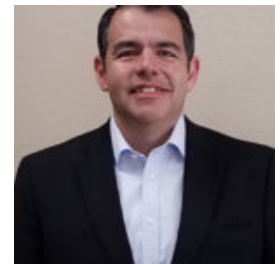


# Convención employs social media for census effort

April 1, 2020

When [Texas Counts](#)—a statewide collaborative seeking to involve local leaders, social service providers and volunteers to ensure that all Texans are counted in the 2020 Census—invited [Convención Bautista Hispana de Texas](#) to be a partner in its effort, neither group anticipated the restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Jesse Rincones, executive director of Convención, and Charles Foster Johnson, executive director of [Pastors for Texas Children](#), serve as co-chairs of Texas Counts' faith subcommittee as they seek to mobilize churches to help make sure everyone in Texas is counted.



Jesse Rincones

“Our work is to encourage participation in the census of our churches because the hard-to-count communities include Spanish-speakers, minorities, immigrant populations and children,” Rincones said regarding the Juntos Contamos campaign. “Most of our churches will hit three or four of those markers.”

As part of the initiative, Convención calls on churches to emphasize the importance of accurate counting for the census, since an undercount could represent loss of resources.

“The census is important, because it affects funding for schools, hospitals and roads, as well as representation in Congress,” Rincones noted. “In Texas, it is estimated that a 1 percent undercount could cost \$ 300 million a year.”

Juntos Contamos also helps people understand the information they provide for the census data is safe and kept sealed for the next 75 years, Rincones said. That means no other government agencies can access personal information found in the census data.

Originally, Convención planned to allocate grants for churches and regional *compañerismos* to create events and have personnel available to help individuals fill out census documents. But COVID-19 and the restrictions that went with it halted those efforts and forced a change in plans.

“We’re doing more of a social media effort now,” Rincones said.

The U.S. Census Bureau’s initial plan for the count focused on April, but since the White House extended stay-at-home guidelines through April 30, the bureau has shifted its plans.

“The whole month of April is when they prefer people to call or go online to fill out the forms, but people can still mail it in” after this month, Rincones noted.

The Census Bureau will follow up with those who fail to respond this month, beginning in May and continuing until late July, he added.

Convención has begun helping churches set up an online presence, now that COVID-19 impedes them from gathering physically.

While some already had a website or social media presence, many were not using them regularly. Now, Rincones and other Convención representatives are providing support so churches can continue their work by using online

services.

“Churches have had to mobilize online and pastors are having to use their leaders to check up on their congregation, most importantly their senior adult members,” Rincones said.