**Hold on to Your Seats – in Congress**

Michigan’s ’s loss was Arizona’s ’s gain 10 years ago –– at least when it came to U.S. Congressional seats. Due to the U.S. census count, Arizona gained a Representative and Michigan lost one as the country’s populations shifted between 2000 and 2010.

That’s because there are only 435 voting seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. Unlike the U.S. Senate, where every state is allocated two Senators, the number of Representatives assigned to each state is determined by population. As a result, states with more people have more members of Congress.

“The U.S. Census is at the core of representative democracy,” said Emma A. Powell, assistant professor of political science and public administration at Central Michigan University. “For each state, it allows the appropriate number of seats at the table for federal decision-making.”

California was the most populous state in the last census, so it has 53 representatives in Congress, while Michigan has 14. California as a whole has more sway in Congress than Michigan. After April 30, 2021 (revised from Dec. 30, 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic), when the census determines the total population of the U.S. and the population of each state, the federal government will determine which states gain or lose seats in Congress.

This is an election year, and we also will be hearing a lot about the Electoral College.

“The census determines representation in the Electoral College, and that is the state’s vote in the presidential election,” Powell said. “Candidates consider that as they campaign, so the value of the census is so important.”

In a way, submitting a census survey is like casting a vote. Not for any political party, but a vote for the state of Michigan and the resources and representation it deserves.