

This is our student paper issue and I would like to thank all the professors who submitted papers this year: Emily Rogers, Andrea Morrison, and Jennifer Morgan. I would also like to thank the editorial board for all their hard work this year reviewing articles. Well done everyone!

There is so much going on politically it is impossible to cover any one topic well. I was very saddened by the passing of Ruth Bader Ginsberg. Her work on the Women's Rights Projects of the American Civil Liberties Union fought against gender-based discrimination. She served for twenty-seven years on the Supreme Court and was the second woman to serve on the Court. Unfortunately, her legacy is overshadowed by partisan politics. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell in 2016 refused any consideration of President Obama's Supreme Court nominee claiming that the upcoming presidential election (that was several months away) would allow voters to influence the kind of justice they wanted. Now with an election weeks away, he hypocritically is not applying that same logic now. To learn more about McConnell's efforts on control of the Supreme Court watch *Frontline's* episode on this topic.<sup>1</sup>

The Decennial Census is wrapping up and redistricting will soon start. Redistricting takes place every ten years after the federal decennial census. District boundaries for federal, state and local elected offices are redrawn to reflect new population data and shifting populations. Many jurisdictions cover redistricting. An example at the state level is Florida after the last census: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Redistricting/2012>. A county-level example is San Diego, California: <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/redistricting.html>. My home state of Texas has a history of redistricting that includes lawsuits: <https://redistricting.capitol.texas.gov/history>.

Redistricting is very important and can have a decade long effect. That is why getting an accurate census count is so vital. Unfortunately this is in jeopardy with the Trump Administration meddling with deadlines and counting. At first the Census posted it would extend counting past the traditional July 31 deadline to October 31 due to the coronavirus pandemic. *NPR* has a story with a timeline that the Census Bureau is now ending the count on September 30 rather than October 3.<sup>2</sup> Currently there is legislation to revert back to the October deadline.<sup>3</sup> This time frame affects those states that rely on getting census data early in the year following the census with constitutional requirements or deadlines for redistricting.<sup>4</sup> The accuracy of data is not just affected by time to count. Trump

recently issued a memorandum to exclude illegal aliens from the count, even though the 14th Amendment says to count all "persons" and since the first census citizens and noncitizens—regardless of immigration status—have been included in the country's official population counts.<sup>5</sup>

I have attended many zoom meetings with colleagues in California who point their computers to their windows that show what seems to me like a Martian landscape. The wildfires in California and the Pacific Northwest are devastating. In August the Governor of California and the USDA Forest Service signed an MOU for stewardship to restore the forests that includes "Sustainable Vegetation Treatments" such as expanding prescribed fire, thinning dense stands, timber harvesting and more.<sup>6</sup> *ProPublica* did a story on the wildfires covering the history of fire management, especially fire suppression, over the past century has led to these mega fires.<sup>7</sup>

Any of these stories could be the lead story of any newscast, but they are all occurring simultaneously, and it is overwhelming. As government information professionals we can help citizens learn what agencies to contact and what news is trustworthy. We have a hard road ahead of us, especially when agencies that are supposed to be apolitical are appearing to be influenced such as the CDC and FDA recently.<sup>8</sup>

Here is hoping for a better 2021. And if you need something to do during the holidays, help out with the End of Term Presidential Harvest: <https://digital2.library.unt.edu/nomination/eth2020/>.

## References

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