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Potential Public Power Impacts of the Mid-Decade Census

On August 7, 2025, President Trump instructed the Commerce Department to begin a new, mid-decade census that excludes undocumented immigrants. The President stated that this count should rely on “modern day facts and figures,” and pointed to data from the 2024 presidential election as the basis for the overhaul. According to Newsweek, “Several states, led by Texas, are considering early or mid-decade redistricting based on changing population data.”

Legal and Political Reaction:

According to the Wall Street Journal, analysts are concerned about the constitutionality of a mid-decade census based on the 14th amendment that requires the counting of all residents for apportionment, regardless of immigration status.

Historically, such mid-decade headcounts required legislative approval. Critics of this move claim that a 5-year census may be politically motivated to shift representation and federal funding away from states with large undocumented populations such as California, Texas and Florida, says the AP Newswire.

Why is the Census Important to Public Power?

The U.S. Census provides a comprehensive snapshot of the nation's people and their characteristics, and this data is essential for informed decision-making across numerous sectors, impacting everything from political power to the allocation of vital resources and services for communities.

Here are the key things that the data from the US Census helps to determine:

Political Representation:

- **Apportionment of Seats in the U.S. House of Representatives:** Data from the decennial census is used to determine how the 435 House seats are distributed among the 50 states, a process called reapportionment. States with increasing populations may gain seats, while those with slower growth or decline may lose them.
- **Redistricting:** The detailed population data, including demographics like race and ethnicity, are used by states and local governments to redraw the boundaries of congressional and state legislative districts, ensuring that each district contains roughly an equal number of people.

Federal Funding:

- **Distribution of Funds to States and Communities:** The census data helps determine how hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funding are distributed each year to states and local communities for programs supporting health, education, housing, and importantly infrastructure (e.g. transportation, communications, sewage, water, energy systems – all critical to public power.) Examples of funded programs: According to the Population Reference Bureau, it includes programs like Medicaid, Head Start, the National School Lunch Program, highway planning and construction, Grants, and many others.
- **Eligibility and Allocation:** Federal programs use census-related data to define eligibility criteria for Federal funding/Grants and for allocating funds using formulas that consider factors like population totals, per capita income, and poverty levels.

Planning and Decision-Making:

- **Community Planning:** Census data provides a foundation for community planning, helping local governments and non-profits make informed decisions about where to build schools, hospitals, roads, public transportation systems, libraries, and other essential services like water, sewer, and energy.
- **Emergency Response:** Detailed population information is critical for emergency preparedness and response, enabling first responders to identify areas needing assistance in times of disaster.
- **Business Decisions:** Businesses rely on census results to make decisions about location, expansion, recruitment, and the products and services they offer to meet the needs of specific communities.

Research:

- Census data provides a valuable resource for researchers in various fields like demographics, health, and social sciences, allowing them to study trends, analyze inequalities, and evaluate the effectiveness of policies.

In essence, the US Census provides a comprehensive snapshot of the nation's people and their characteristics, and this data is essential for informed decision-making across numerous sectors, impacting everything from political power to the allocation of vital resources and services for communities.

Census Data is Important to Public Power Because It Determines:

1. The amount of federal/state dollars (for which public power often competes),
2. Disaster Preparedness Funding,
3. Infrastructure Decisions,
4. Planning at the state and local level, and the
5. Location of where potential industrial and commercial rate payers locate.



Census Data Plays a Major Role in Industrial/Commercial Rate Payers Decisions

When an industrial or commercial business is considering locating in a community, the decision typically hinges on a mix of economic, logistical, workforce, regulatory, and quality-of-life.

Factors That Significant Rate Payers Take Into Account:

- **Location and Accessibility:** Proximity to major highways, rail, ports, and airports for supply chain and distribution. ✓ Census Impacted
- **Training and Education:** Proximity to technical/community colleges, or workforce development programs. ✓ Census Impacted
- **Regulatory Environment:** Zoning permitting environmental regulations and ease of doing business.
- **Incentives and Government Support:** State/local incentives: economic development support, tax credits, grants, and infrastructure support. ✓ Census Impacted
- **Infrastructure:** Utilities, broadband and transportation infrastructure. ✓ Census Impacted
- **Community Quality of Life:** Schools, healthcare, housing availability, etc. ✓ Census Impacted
- **Site Readiness:** Shovel ready sites, brown and green fields.
- **Market Demand & Industry Clusters:** local demand and industry presence.
- **Political and Community Support:** Local leadership and community acceptance.

In summary, the Census is very important to Public Utilities, and the Census Data can have a huge impact on business.

Sources: *Newsweek, The Wall Street Journal, AP Newswire, US Census Bureau, The Daily Beast, The Guardian and New York Magazine, US Department of Commerce, and the Small Business Administration.*

Why Most Utility Strategic Plans Fail (And What Actually Works)

Article written by Mark McCain, HCI Staff.

I surveyed municipal utility leaders attending my strategic planning seminar, and the results were interesting: 75% of participants had completed strategic plans, only 60% found the development process effective, and just 50% saw effective implementation. That means 1 in 2 utilities have plans that aren't working. If you're in that 50%, here's why—and what works instead.

The Three Major Flaws That Kill Strategic Plans

1. The “Flying Blind” Problem

The Problem: Either avoiding strategic planning altogether or creating plans in isolation without organizational buy-in.

I see two versions of this flaw. Most commonly, utilities simply aren't developing plans at all. Maybe they don't have the bandwidth to undertake strategic planning, or they had a bad experience with it in the past. So, they keep moving along, reacting to problems and addressing what seems urgent without stopping to ask: What's most important for the organization now?



The second version happens when the utility director or a small department develops a plan in isolation. They created what seems like a solid strategy—and it might be—but the utility governing board wasn't meaningfully involved in the process and senior management didn't help shape the priorities. When it comes time to implement, there's no organizational buy-in because key stakeholders had no role in creating it.

Fix: Strategic planning isn't a solo project. The people who need to approve budgets, allocate resources, and champion initiatives must be part of the planning process.

2. The “Boil the Ocean” Problem

The Problem: Trying to fix everything at once with 15+ strategic initiatives.

I've heard of strategic plans that include new billing systems, grid modernization, workforce development, customer portals, renewable integration, cybersecurity upgrades, rate restructuring, economic development partnerships, and other “critical priorities.”

When everything is urgent, nothing gets the focused attention it needs. Your team becomes scattered, budgets get spread thin, and progress stalls across all fronts.



Fix: If everything is a priority, nothing is a priority. The most successful utilities I work with a focus on 4-6 goals that will make the biggest difference with 3-5 strategies to achieve each goal. This balances clarity with comprehensiveness.

3. Implementation Amnesia

The Problem: No clear owner, timeline, or accountability measures.

The plan gets approved with great fanfare, then disappears into the daily grind of operations. “Strategic initiatives” get buried under urgent emails. They get secondary status to ongoing activities. And no one asks how implementation is going? Six months later, someone says, “Whatever happened to that strategic plan?”



I've seen beautiful plans that fail to take the next step of thinking through implementation. They don't develop action plan for each strategy. They don't create implementation timelines and milestones. They don't assign responsibility or develop budget implications.

Fix: Create an implementation plan. Assign a specific person to own each goal, set milestones, and review progress regularly. Create a schedule for people to periodically report on progress to the governing board.

What Actually Works: The 3 Essential Outcomes

Based on what I've seen work, here's a framework that utilities can use to get real results and achieve three critical leadership outcomes:

1. Define a Compelling Purpose for Your Organization

Beyond "keeping the lights on"—what unique value does your utility bring to your community? Is it exceptional reliability and outstanding storm response? Leading the region in renewable energy? Providing the most competitive rates for economic development?

Your purpose should energize employees and justify community investment. When team members understand why their work matters beyond just maintaining infrastructure, they bring different energy to their roles.

The Test: Does the CEO talk frequently about why your utility exists and what makes it special? Does the CEO say it so often that employees know it and can repeat it?

2. Identify the Most Important Strategies for Success

This isn't about listing everything you could do—it's about identifying the 4-5 goals that will make the biggest difference for your utility. These should build on your existing strengths and opportunities while addressing your most critical weaknesses and threats.

Maybe it's modernizing your customer experience to match what people expect from other service providers. Perhaps it's preparing your workforce for a wave of retirements coming in the next five years. Or it could be positioning your utility to take advantage of new funding opportunities for infrastructure improvements.

The Test: Can your leadership team explain your top priorities without looking at notes?

3. Align Your Team's Efforts and Unleash Their Talents

This is where most strategic plans fall apart. You can have a brilliant strategy, but if your team doesn't understand how their daily work connects to the bigger picture, you'll never achieve meaningful results.

Alignment means every department is working toward the same goals. It means people understand how their individual contributions matter. It means team energy is focused on what matters most, not scattered across dozens of competing initiatives.

The Test: Do your employees see clear connections between their daily work and your strategic priorities? Are goals and strategies assigned to them and is progress evaluated in performance evaluations?

The Reality Check

Most strategic plans fail because there is no collaboration on the plan's development and there's no recognition the end of the plan's development phase is the beginning of the implementation phase. Your utility can't afford another shelf-sitting plan. In an industry facing overwhelming challenges, you need strategic clarity more than ever.

The good news? When utilities get these three outcomes right, the results are noticeable. Teams become more engaged. You can feel the organization-wide focus on impactful initiatives. Progress accelerates. Board and community confidence grows.

Quick Self-Assessment: Is Your Plan Headed for Trouble?

- Was it created mostly by a small group of people without input from others?
- Does it have more than 6 major initiatives?
- Has it been more than 3 months since anyone discussed progress?
- Do most employees not know what's in it?

If you checked 2+ boxes, it's time for a new approach.

Ready to create a strategic plan that actually gets implemented? The utilities that thrive in the coming decade will be the ones who have a plan and act on it—they'll be the ones with the clearest purpose, sharpest focus, and best team alignment. This is the number one job of leadership and the essential outcomes of effective strategic planning. Let's talk about how you can get started.

Mark McCain is Hometown Connections Executive Consultant for Strategic Planning. He provides strategic planning services to public power utilities and joint action agencies nationwide.

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HCI Owner, Sales Affiliate, and Partner
**Celebrating the Career
and Contributions of
LISA MILLER**

Lisa Miller, Manager of External Affairs at Energy Southeast, is retiring after more than three decades of exceptional service in the electric utility industry. Since joining the organization in 2007, Lisa has played a vital role in shaping strategic communications, community and economic development, and governmental affairs in support of Energy Southeast and its eleven members. Her leadership, integrity, and passion for service have left a lasting impact—not only within the agency, but across the communities and people we serve.



A Legacy of Leadership

Lisa began her journey at Energy Southeast in February 2007 as Director of Communications. Just one year later, she was promoted to Manager of Communications and Marketing, a role she held until 2020. That year, she was named Manager of Communications and Economic Development, and in 2024, she assumed her current role as Manager of External Affairs. In each position, Lisa brought vision, clarity, and a people-first approach that elevated the agency's mission and presence throughout the region.

Guiding Communications, Development, and Policy

As Manager of External Affairs, Lisa oversaw the agency's strategic communications and marketing, economic and community development initiatives, and governmental affairs activities. Her extensive responsibilities included:

- Serving as editor of the Energy Southeast Communique', Utility News E-Newsletter, and Economic Development News
- Overseeing the Energy Southeast Scholarship Program
- Managing the agency's website and social media presence
- Planning and coordinating the annual Power Supply Conference
- Administering Hometown Connections® marketing efforts as the Sales Affiliate for Alabama and Mississippi

- Coordinating media relations for Energy Southeast and supporting Members with public relations needs
- Supporting organizations such as Electric Cities of Alabama and the American Public Power
- Collaborating with chambers of commerce across the region
- Leading community and economic development efforts through the Energy Southeast Economic Development Program
- Most recently, facilitating the joint action agency's rebranding campaign from Alabama Municipal Electric Authority to Energy Southeast

Representing Public Power and Building Relationships

Lisa also served as Energy Southeast's governmental affairs liaison, working with local, state, and national leaders to represent the agency's interests. She cultivated strong relationships with policymakers and Member city governments, consistently championing initiatives that aligned with the values of public power and community development.

A Career of Excellence

With over 36 years of experience in communications, marketing, economic development, and public affairs, Lisa has been a trusted voice in the electric utility industry. Prior to joining Energy Southeast, she served for 18 years as Manager of Communications and Public Relations for Central Alabama Electric Cooperative (CAEC) in Prattville, AL.

Her work has been widely recognized, earning numerous awards from:

- The American Public Power Association
- The Alabama Rural Electric Association
- The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association
- The Cooperative Communicators Association (CCA)
- The Montgomery Association of Business Communicators

In 2006, she earned the prestigious Master Cooperative Communicator certification from CCA.

Involved, Invested, and Inspirational

Beyond her professional responsibilities, Lisa has remained deeply engaged in her community and the broader industry. She serves on the Advisory Board of Auburn University's Government & Economic Development Institute, is a member of the Economic Development Association of Alabama Board of Directors and is affiliated with the Southern Economic Development Council.

She is also active in local organizations that work for the betterment of people and businesses across the region. A native of Alexander City, Alabama, Lisa holds a B.A. in Public Relations/Journalism from Auburn University. She and her husband, Mike, reside in Prattville.

A Lasting Impact and a Well-Earned Retirement

“Lisa Miller brings a level of dedication and professionalism that is truly rare. Her long and distinguished career in external affairs reflects not only deep expertise, but a genuine commitment to the people we serve. Lisa cares deeply about the joint action agencies’ cooperative and the communities that depend on us, and it shows in everything she does. Her leadership and insight have made a lasting impact—and while we celebrate her well-earned retirement, her presence and expertise will be deeply missed.”

— *Mark Ennis, Energy Southeast Manager of Compliance and Distribution Services*

The Hometown Connections Advantage

25 Years of Empowering and Educating Public Power Utilities



Learn more at www.hometownconnections.com.

We're a nonprofit services organization specializing in the unique challenges of community-owned utilities.

Solutions for Public Power

- Advanced Metering Infrastructure
- Business Strategy
- Customer Care
- Cybersecurity
- Finance
- Operations
- Strategic Planning
- Technology
- Workforce

  **Hometown Connections**

Upcoming Conferences

Sept 7-10 **APPA Business & Financial Conference 2025, Raleigh, NC**
<https://www.publicpower.org/2025-business-financial-conference-information-sponsors>

Sept 8-11 **RE***
<https://www.re-plus.com/>

Sept 16-17 **CEATI Strategy & Innovation Conference, Fort Lauderdale, FL**
<https://www.ceati.com/event/strategy-innovation-conference-2025>
NOTE: Loreto Sarracini, President of HCI Partner Acumen will be presenting

Sept 22-24 **American Municipal Power's Annual Conference, Columbus, OH**
<https://www.amppartners.org/services/annual-conference/>

Sept 23-24 **Michigan Municipal Electric Association (MMEA) Annual Conference, Muskegon, MI**
Contact MMEA at 517-323-8346

Sept 23-25 **T & D World Live**
<https://events.tdworld.com/2025>

Sept 24-25 **Northern California Power Agency (NCPA) Annual Meeting, Monterey, CA**
<https://www.ncpa.com/meetings/events/ncpa-annual-conference>

Oct 1-3 **MPUA Annual Conference, Osage Beach, MO**
<https://mpua.org/page/annualconference>

Oct 7-9 **The Utility Expo, Louisville, KY**
<https://www.theutilityexpo.com/>

Oct 28-29 **2025 FMEA Energy Connections Conference & Trade Show, Jacksonville, FL**
<https://www.flpublicpower.com/events/2025-fmea-energy-connections-conference>

Nov 11-12 **CEATI Transmission & Distribution Conference, Orlando, FL**
<https://www.ceati.com/event/transmission-distribution-conference-2025>

Jan 11-13 **APPA Joint Action Conference, Destin, FL**
<https://www.publicpower.org/event/joint-action-conference>

Jan 20-22 **2026 POWERGEN International, San Antonio, TX**
<https://www.powergen.com/>

Feb 8-11 **2026 NARUC Winter Policy Summit, Washington, D.C.**
<https://www.naruc.org/events/all-events/2026-naruc-winter-policy-summit/>

To have your conference listed, please send information to acdumont-ewing@homtownconections.com

HCI Blog

HCI Blog: A Platform for Collaboration and Innovation

<https://blog.hometownconnections.com/>

HCI warmly invites all its Partners and Affiliates to actively contribute to the blog. Whether it's sharing a recent project, providing commentary on industry trends, or offering advice based on your experiences, your input is highly valued. This collaborative effort will not only highlight the incredible work being done across the network but also provide a valuable resource for continuous learning and development.

How to Contribute

Contributing to the HCI blog is straightforward. Interested Partners and Affiliates need to follow these simple steps:

- **Write your article:** Focus on topics that you are enthusiastic about and that would benefit the HCI community or public power in general.
- **Submit your article:** Send your completed article to acdumont-ewing@hometownconnections.com

Want to
STAND OUT
in a Crowd?



Advertise on the HCI Blog and/or in the HCI Newsletter!

Reach a targeted and engaged audience by advertising in our professionally rebranded newsletter, distributed by HCI Affiliate members (Joint Action Agencies) to their utility customers. This is a great opportunity to promote your company and services directly to decision-makers and create business opportunities across multiple communities.

Ad rates:

- Half-page, full-color ad: \$250
- Full-page, full-color ad: \$400

Space is limited, so reserve your spot today and get your business in front of the right audience.



Hometown Connections, Inc. is a national, non-profit utility services organization specializing in the unique challenges of community-owned utilities. Our team of consultants and vendor partners will help you streamline your business processes, enhance customer service, improve security, develop plans for the future, and much more. Since our founding 25 years ago, HCI has been dedicated to connecting Public Power with trusted, high-value products, services, and expert knowledge. HCI actively seeks out and collaborates with top-tier third-party partners who bring patented technologies, innovative services, and industry-leading expertise. These partnerships empower utilities of all sizes to drive long-term improvements, optimize operations, and enhance service reliability for their communities.

Celebrating 25 Years of Empowering Public Power!

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Michigan Municipal Electric Association
Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association
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Nebraska Municipal Power Pool
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