

QUESTION AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE ANNUAL STREET LIST FORM

What is the history behind the census?

Now known as the annual street list, the Massachusetts annual town census goes back to the 1600s, when men who wished to become registered voters were qualified to vote if their property was of sufficient value. By 1860, the qualifications had changed from just property value to also include a man's length of residency and having paid taxes. By 1890, women were also allowed to vote, under the same requirements, but only for members of the School Committee! The law requiring an annual Town census has been amended over the years, and currently Massachusetts state law Chapter 51 requires that the Board of Registrars conduct the annual town census. In Wales, as in most towns, the Town Clerk's office does the work, under the direction of the Board of Registrars. While it was originally done house-to-house, since 1974 the information has been gathered primarily by mail.

Is it confidential?

In each town only a few persons are authorized to have access to the information that you provide, and there are multiple layers of password protection on the computers where the information is stored. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts maintains the security of the system in accordance with Massachusetts data security laws. Information about minors on the street list is never released to the public. Additionally, there are a few specially protected classes of residents whose names do not appear on the public street list, such as public safety personnel and residents of shelters. There are no Social Security numbers or financial information tied to the census.

How is the information used?

The information from the returned street list forms has many different uses. These are some of them:

- The Town Clerk uses it to maintain the list of registered voters and to help the town keep an up-to-date list of where residents live.
- The School Department can request reports to help them to project future levels of school enrollment.
- The Council on Aging uses the information when applying for grants and to estimate the possible demand for services to those over age 60.
- The Office of the Jury Commissioner uses each community's street list to compile a list of residents for jury duty. An accurate list provides for a fair and representative jury pool.
- The Veterans Agent receives a list of the U.S. Military veterans in Town, so he can help veterans with their needs.
- The presence of a persons' name on the street list may also be used to establish residency for a number of things: to qualify for in-state college tuition; for job applications or special low-cost loan programs; even for adoption applications.
- It's important to return your street list, because years from now, you may need to prove that you or your children lived in Wales or resided in Massachusetts at a certain time, and the street list for that year is the proof of residency.

What happens if I don't return the form?

Registered voters who do not return the Annual Street List Form and do not respond to a follow-up mailing must be designated as inactive voters on the street list. All the registered voters at the address will become inactive. Such persons will only be eligible to vote after they fill out an "Affirmation of Current and Continuous Residence" the next time they come to vote. Every household that fails to complete the form has to be contacted a second time, which takes additional time, paper and postage.

Last year I indicated that someone moved out, so why are they are still on the form?

A registered voter who moves and does not register to vote in another community cannot be removed from our street list for three years. That is why you may have told us someone moved but they still appear on your form. Tell them to register in their new community, and when they do, their name will disappear!

Who should complete the street list form?

Any adult residing in the home can complete and sign the form.

What do I need to do with the form?

- Please look over the names listed on the form. If there are no changes to the pre-printed information, simply sign and return the form to the Town Clerk.
- Add any new people who reside at your address, and indicate with "M" or "D" if someone has moved away or died. Students away at school, people who have moved to a nursing home or those away in the military are still considered residents of Wales, and can remain on the form.
- Check to see that the date of birth is correct for each person.
- Please add or correct the occupations listed on the form.
- The "Party" column tells you what each person's voter registration status is. U stands for "unenrolled" which means not enrolled in any particular political party. This is what most people mean when they say "independent". The other designations are: D for Democrat, R for Republican, L for Libertarian and J for Green/Rainbow. No letter in the "Party" column means the person is not registered to vote in Wales.
- You cannot use the Street List Form to change your voter registration, to do that you need to complete a new Voter Registration Form. Please call the Town Clerk if you need one.

What if I have other questions or concerns?

Please feel free to call, email or come in to the Town Clerk's office to ask for more information. The street list form is an important tool for the town, and the information needs to be as accurate as possible. The law regarding the annual street list can be found in M.G. L. Chapter 51, particularly sections 4 & 6, although other chapters of the law also apply.