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## Notes from the Tuesday December 23, 2014 release of State Population Estimates as of July 1, 2014 by the U.S. Census Bureau

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# Notes from the Tuesday December 23, 2014 release of State Population Estimates as of July 1, 2014 by the U.S. Census Bureau

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1. The Census Bureau estimates the population of Nebraska as of July 1, 2014 to be 1,881,503. This is an increase of 12,534 from the July 1, 2013 estimate, or an increase of 0.67 percent. Nebraska's most current annual growth is slightly (about 1,000) less than the gain of 13,482 or 0.73 percent in the prior year. **Nebraska has now gained population for 27 straight years**, with the last annual population loss occurring in 1987, amid the "farm crisis". {Note: the national press release indicated that 6 states lost population from 2013 to 2014 – see here: <http://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2014/cb14-232.html> }
2. For comparison, Iowa increased by 14,785 or 0.48 percent to now stand at 3,107,126. Kansas increased by 8,220 or 0.28 percent to have 2,904,021 persons as of July 1, 2014. The U.S. now has 318,857,056 people as of July 1, 2014, an increase of 2.4 million since July 1, 2013 (2,359,525) or 0.75 percent. **Thus, in the latest year, Nebraska exceeded the growth rates in our best comparison states of Iowa and Kansas, while trailing the U.S. growth rate slightly.**
3. Nebraska's percentage change in population in the latest year ranked 22<sup>nd</sup> best among all states. This is an improvement from the growth rate in the prior year, when it ranked 27<sup>th</sup> best. This occurred even as Nebraska's annual growth rate declined slightly (see bullet point #1) given the changes seen in other states. (Note: the 22<sup>nd</sup> best ranking is one of the better ones that I can remember in my 10 years of working with such data – I can't verify that quickly with all the yearly numbers, but a **22<sup>nd</sup> best growth rate is really good for Nebraska** – we are often in the low to mid 30s.)
4. Looking beyond just what has occurred in the latest year to compare all changes since the April 1, 2010 census, Nebraska has grown by 55,162 people or 3.0 percent. This ranks 26<sup>th</sup> best among all states, trailing the U.S. growth rate since 2010 slightly (3.3 percent). Iowa has grown by 2.0 percent, ranking 30<sup>th</sup>, while Kansas has increased 1.8 percent, ranking 32<sup>nd</sup> best.
5. The vast majority of Nebraska's rises in population since 2010 stem from natural population change, where deaths exceed births. There have been approximately 110,000 births compared to 64,000 deaths, a natural change of about 46,000. Expressed

as a rate, this is a natural change increase of 25 per 1,000 people in Nebraska at the time of the 2010 Census, which ranks 12<sup>th</sup> highest among the states.

6. The other population change factor, net migration, has also been positive. Nebraska's net migration since 2010 is estimated to be about 10,000 persons, or a rate of 5.5 per 1,000 Nebraska residents in the 2010 Census (which would rank 30<sup>th</sup> highest nationally). Nebraska does lose people to other U.S. states (about -5,500 since 2010 or -3.0 per 1,000 ranking 29<sup>th</sup>) but this is offset by increases of residents from foreign countries (about 15,500 or 8.5 per 1,000 population, which would rank 25<sup>th</sup> highest).
7. In an analysis to evaluate the likelihood for Nebraska to hold or lose one of its current 3 congressional seats, it appears Nebraska is in relatively good position to keep all 3 in the 2020 census. I applied 5 different sets of growth rates to the 2014 population estimates to come up with populations in 2020 for all states. I then ran these figures through the "apportionment calculator" which replicates the way the apportionment has been done the last several decades. {This calculation is subject to Congressional oversight and approval and could be changed.}

In none of these 5 scenarios does Nebraska's 3<sup>rd</sup> seat rank worse than the 431<sup>st</sup> position, with the last seat being number 435 (and the seat "first out" or missing the cutoff being number 436). So Nebraska likely has some room to spare before it would lose a seat in the 2020 calculation. A summary of the growth rates applied and Nebraska's seat number and distance to seat number 436 is provided below.

Note that these are simply applications of various growth rates and are not actual population projections. True projections would factor in items such as the baby-boomer population cohort aging into age groups that have higher mortality. Thus, these growth rate applications are simpler than the dynamic nature of how the population actually changes. In addition, local, national, and world events could lead to various population changes and impact the figures. For example, Hurricane Katrina had a great impact on Louisiana's population and contributed greatly to its loss of a congressional seat in the 2010 apportionment. Domestic and international migration are always wildcards and there has been much discussion of the impact of the recent executive orders and how they might change the level of immigration (or deportation). Further changes regarding the immigration issue will continue to impact the total populations in each state, and no one can predict the full impact of those and other such possible changes.

**The bottomline is that based upon these 2014 population estimates and various growth assumptions going forward to 2020, Nebraska is not in extreme danger of losing a Congressional seat.** However, it would be foolish to get lulled into a false sense of security and think there is no danger, as the possibility to lose a seat definitely exists. This year's relatively good population growth near the U.S. average keeps Nebraska in a

good position to keep all 3 seats, and moves us a step closer to 2020, reducing the amount of time over which large shifts in population trends might occur. It is likely that Nebraska's growth relative to the U.S. average will weaken as the economy continues to recover and domestic migration normalizes to typical past trends.

Summary of growth rates applied to the 2014 estimated state populations:

1. 2013-14 growth rate averaged with 2010-14 growth rate: seat 415, 20 to spare
2. 2013-14 growth rate averaged with 2010-14 and 2000s growth rates: seat 419, 16 to spare
3. 2013-14 growth rate averaged with 2010-14, 2000s, and 1990s growth rates: seat 424, 11 to spare
4. Growth rates of 1990s, 2000s and 2010s (per 2010 to 2014) averaged: seat 426, 9 to spare
5. 1990s growth rate applied (high immigration timeframe): seat 431, 4 to spare

{Note: per #5 above, the 1990s growth rate, if applied to the 2010 Census counts, would have Nebraska's 3<sup>rd</sup> seat as being the "second one out" or number 437. However, since time has passed between 2010 and 2014, this shortens the timeframe of the applied growth rate (where NE was trailing the U.S. growth rate during the 1990s) and thus would suggest ranking as seat 431. This example illustrates why Nebraska is considered to be close to the cut line, or in possible danger of losing a Congressional seat in 2020.}