

CENSUS DAY PLUS 10

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, this is census day plus 10. My message to the American people is, if they have not already filled out their form, please do so now and mail it in. Be part of this great civic ceremony.

As of today, over 61 percent of Americans have responded to the census, with 39 percent to go. This is a critically important milestone for the 2000 Census, and I am extremely encouraged by the American people's effort and by the Census Bureau's transparent tabulation efforts. Just months ago, the General Accounting Office warned that the initial response rate for the 2000 Census might peak at 61 percent. Well, with 8 days still to spare, the 2000 Census has reached this point and forms continue to flow in daily.

I am extremely heartened by the response thus far, and tonight I say to the remaining 39 percent, please complete your forms. Do it today. Put it in the mail. As always, this is our main message. Fill out your form today.

Unfortunately, we have reached 61 percent despite the amazing comments of some of my Republican colleagues and even Members of the Republican leadership. With 39 percent of the American people still not heard from, we have Members of Congress who should all know better telling the American people that the census is optional. We have Members of Congress saying that they, and I quote, "believe in voluntarily cooperating," end quote, with the government; but beyond that they will not follow the law. Since when did following the law in this country become a voluntary, optional thing?

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Others have compared the long form to a college exam where some questions can be skipped. Is it because some people do not know the answers? I certainly hope not. Do they want participation, or do they want to make participation optional?

Last week, Census Director Ken Prewitt testified that the initial response rate for the long form has been almost 12 percent below the response rate for the households receiving the short form. This is almost double the differential from the 1990 census and could seriously threaten the accuracy of the final count.

What is really disheartening is the fact that most of the questions on the long form have been around for decades. They were part of the Bush and Reagan census. Even more astonishing about this new-found concern about the census is that, over 2 years ago, the content of the long and short forms, while they were being finalized, absolutely every Member of Congress re-

ceived a detailed list of the questions to be asked, including a description of the need for the asking of it, along with the specific legal requirements supporting it.

Notification of Congress is required by title 13 for a very good reason, to prevent the very situation we face today, a census effort at risk because Members of Congress simply do not know or do not care about the importance of the census data.

Members of Congress received this information with all of the questions in 1997 and 1998. I know that all of the Members who are complaining about the census got a copy. Did they not read their mail? The time for input on the questions was then, not now when they will do more harm than good.

Even last week, the Republican leadership convened a press conference supposedly in support of the census. But they went on to urge Americans to skip questions they were uncomfortable with. Maybe the Republican leadership should be reminded that the questions asked by the census represent a balance between the needs of our Nation's communities and the need to keep the time and effort required to complete the form to a minimum. Only information required by Congress to manage or evaluate programs is collected by the census.

Federal and State funds for schools, employment services, housing assistance, road construction, day care facilities, hospitals, emergency services, programs for seniors, and much more are distributed based on census figures.

Also, the Census Bureau uses data acquired from the long form to establish the baseline for many of the economic reports they release year-round, including data on the Consumer Price Index and unemployment. Without accurate data, we would be forced to manage our economic policies with even less information than we currently have available.

We should remember that the Census Bureau has gone to great efforts to make both the short and long forms as brief as possible. The 2000 Census short form contains eight questions, down from nine in 1990. The 2000 Census long form contains 53 questions, down from 57 in 1990, the shortest long form in decades.

The only new question in the census, which was added with my support as part of welfare reform, asked for information on grandparents as care givers.

I am a bit confused, too, because the same people who today are making such a fuss over the long form just 6 months ago tried to add a question to the short form which everyone has to complete.

I have a series of editorials from around the country urging Americans to stand up and be counted for their communities, for their representation, for their distribution of Federal funds. I would like to put in the RECORD an editorial from the Daily News from New York City, the city that I am

proud to represent. The editorial is as follows:

STAND UP AND BE COUNTED

That's the slogan of Census 2000, and nowhere is that cry more urgent than in New York. Last time around—10 years ago—New Yorkers sat down. There was an undercount. And the state lost out on everything from political representation to new schools. New York, particularly New York City, must not let this happen again.

The filing deadline came and went April 1. But the "Be counted" Web site doesn't shut down until tomorrow. So if you haven't returned your census form, take a few minutes (or a few seconds, if you have the eight-question short form) and do so. Now.

And, please, try not to get your dander up about how nosy some of the questions seem to be. Answers on how you get to work and what time you leave each morning, for example, can be used by local officials for highway and mass-transit improvements. Nobody's tracking your movement. Other answers will aid in planning for health, housing, education, employment, police and so forth. As for those racial-identification categories, just follow the Census Bureau's advice: Put down whatever race or ethnicity you identify with. It's simply a part of drawing an accurate population profile in this multicultural nation.

So far, returns here are hovering about 55%—with some areas (like central Brooklyn, with a dismal 37%) considerably lower.

A study by Price Waterhouse Coopers after the 1990 census determined that New York State was undercounted by 277,000 residents—245,000 of them in New York City. That cost the city three Assembly seats, a state Senate seat and half a congressional seat.

As Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-Queens), the ranking member of the House census subcommittee put it: "It's your future, don't leave it blank."

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY), an outstanding leader and actually a new Member of Congress, representing the City of Chicago. She has been very active on the Subcommittee on Census and has worked very hard to bring up participation.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentlewoman from New York for her tremendous leadership on assuring a complete count of all Americans.

I wish I could be as optimistic. Unfortunately, in the city of Chicago, we are 10th out of the 10 largest cities in the response to the census so far. My hope is that all responsible elected leaders will be encouraging people from our States, from our cities and communities to fill out that census form.

I have heard a lot of political pandering, we all have in our days, but rarely have I heard anything quite as irresponsible as the trashing that is going on of the census long form. One would think that some of those elected officials who are doing it, Members of this body on the Republican side of the aisle who are doing that, one would think that they had never seen that form before.

As the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) pointed out, every single Member was able to scrutinize every single question. As a consequence, we came up with a form, a long form that is, in fact, shorter than

it was in 1990 and adds only one question. All of us are interested in knowing how many grandparents now are taking care of children. We hear that all the time from our constituents.

They had total control over what was going to be in there. There were no complaints in 1990 from them.

How long does it take to get to work? People say, oh, why do you have to know that? Well, why does one think that we want to know that, so that we can understand where we need transportation dollars. Do we need a new road? Do we need more transit to shorten that time? Do we need more affordable housing so that people can live near the jobs?

Employment questions. What is this new economy about? Let us use the census to understand that better. Is our prosperity really being shared? Are there more people who are working for themselves, and are they making a decent living when they are working at home?

In Illinois, in the Chicago area, in Cook County, we undercounted enough children in 1990 to fill 78 schools. That is why we need an accurate count, so that we can make sure that we get the educational opportunities to our kids.

Now, one listens to John Stossel on 20/20 last Friday night, and one would think that the census is simply a tool of big government, in fact, he said a government that is selling dependency, that is his word, that is what the census is about in his conspiratorial tone.

But who really is using this census data? I would posit that ABC, the very station he was on, that 20/20 probably uses the census data to figure out who the audience is, where to sell advertising. The private sector surely as much as the public sector uses the census data to figure out where investments should be made, where are we going to put our money in communities, who is living out there.

This is not a conspiracy of government. This is a partnership with the people of the United States so that we can distribute public dollars and private dollars.

We need to be doing the census form for ourselves. This is not a favor to anybody. This is going to bring results to every single community. There is not a district in this country that will not be better served if there is a complete count.

So for any politician to get up and pander and say, oh, you do not have to fill this out, it is really intrusive, is counterproductive for their own constituents. Leadership is about explaining to constituents why this is important, why it is in their interest to fill it out. When people complain, we encourage them to understand what the real meaning of this complete count is.

I am so proud to join with the gentlewoman from New York in her work and so many of us who are trying every single day to make sure that the people in this country get what they deserve. Anyone who has ever said, "I send my

tax dollars to Washington, what do I get back, am I getting my fair share?", if they have not filled out the census form, then that is not an appropriate question, because if they do not fill out this form, then they will not be counted.

So I join my colleagues in urging all Americans to get this census form in. They have got a few more days to do it. I encourage my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, to inform their constituents about the importance.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. NAPOLITANO), another leader for a complete count.

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to add to the comments that my colleagues have made in just the last few minutes. But I, most of all, want to thank everyone who has completed their census form so far. Wherever you are, whether you are an American citizen, a recent immigrant or whoever, you are making a difference for your community and setting our Nation on the best path for the new century.

For those of you who have not yet filled out and returned your census questionnaires, please, you have 10 days to finish. Do it today. Do it now. Do it this very minute. It is not too late.

As of last night, over 60 percent of Americans have completed and sent in their census form. This is very exciting news. But we must keep working with the census, with our communities, with our neighborhoods across the Nation to reach out to the remaining 40 percent of Americans who have yet to return their census questionnaire.

As we have heard, 61 percent return has already been received. In my district alone, 68 to 71 percent of the people in the 34th Congressional District have completed and returned their census form. The City of Norwalk completed 71 out of 78 percent targeted; Whittier, 70 out of 72; Montebello, 70 out of 73; Pico Rivera, 68 out of 77 percent; Santa Fe Springs, 71 out of 78 percent; Industry, 69 out of a targeted 33 percent; and La Puente, the best in the area, 70 percent out of a targeted 67. They have overpassed their target. This is better than the anticipated rate out of California and nationwide.

However, there are a lot of people that still have to be counted. If 30 percent of our people go uncounted, that is 30 percent less money to pay for schools. That is less money for repairing our roads, for funding hospitals, for providing services to our senior citizens and for our recreational programs for our youth.

Now, we all know that some people have had difficulties with our census forms, especially the long form which asked 53 questions. Some people find some of those questions intrusive and awkward. Personally, I question the way in which the form asked about my race and my ethnicity. But what I do not question is that it is vitally impor-

tant to my community of Norwalk and to my surrounding communities, that I be a responsible citizen and complete and return my census form.

An important fact to remember, whether one is filling out the long form or the short form is that one's responses are confidential. The information one gives is not, I repeat, it is not sold to marketing firms. It is not handed over to the IRS, nor to the INS, nor to the FBI. In fact, it is against the law for the Census Bureau to give or sell information to anyone. That is including this House. The law works. In the last census of 1990, not one single case of information leaking occurred.

The Census Bureau has gone to great effort within the mandates of Congress to make the forms as brief as possible. The 2000 Census short form contains eight questions, down from nine in 1990, and the long form contains 53, down from 57 in 1990, the shortest form in history.

The Census Bureau uses long form data as a baseline. That means the bottom line for every single economic indicator they publish. Without this accurate baseline, we cannot produce any economic information needed to run our Nation's economy effectively, to identify the areas in need, and take on other indicators to be able to help our communities.

We need a more accurate count of America's blacks, America's Hispanics, America's Asians, and American Indians. Regardless of what my colleagues on the other side, regardless of their arguments or what they state, for us, it is not optional. For us, it is a necessity.

Republicans have done everything possible to harm Census 2000 effort. We must not fall for their rhetoric. This latest effort to paint questions which had been on the long form for over 50 years as intrusive and unneeded is just another attempt to derail the accurate count of census.

To the people in my district, to the people of the United States and across this great land of ours, I ask that they please remember how important it is to their community, to our community. So I plea again, please complete and return your census form.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK), a great leader on a complete count. She even hosted a public hearing in her district and has been a leader here on the floor and in the committee work, and I welcome here tonight.

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Mrs. MEEK of Florida. I thank my dear colleague, the gentlewoman from New York. The gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) hails from New York, but her influence on the census has gone throughout this country, and we thank her for that leadership.

Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to come back again tonight. If the gentlewoman were to call us in tomorrow, if she were

to call us in every day this week, I would be here, because we do not have enough voices speaking out for the census.

Regrettably, we have had some ill winds. They came in during the Ides of March and they are still here, they are still talking. We are trying our very best to say to the country that the census is a good thing. It is in the Constitution. It is something that we should do. We keep talking about we are a Nation of laws. Well, if that is the case, why can we not stick to our laws? Let us not just use them when they are customized to fit our political ideas, but to use them at all times.

It is extremely disappointing to see some of my good friends in the Republican Party saying to all of our constituents that the census is optional; that they do not have to fill out all the questions; that it is not mandatory; that citizens do not have to do this. Well, it is. It is important that all of our constituents fill out the census forms.

Now, it is not too late. We do not have the return I would like to see in my district. We have, like, 53 percent. I would like to see 66, 76, 90 percent return. But we still have time. We are still going to churches; we are going to wherever people congregate and saying to them, fill out the forms. For those who have not filled theirs out yet, please fill it out and return it. We are doing our very best to help.

I am just really astounded to see that our most noble elevated body, the Senate, passed a Sense of the Senate Resolution essentially reinforcing the idea that not completing your form is okay. This is completely unacceptable. It is completely irresponsible. The Senate should set a standard for the country instead of undermining an effort which this Congress has seen fit to participate in.

Now, this thing about the questions, maybe we should not have to go over that over and over again because the questions are there and they are not that hard. They are only asking those kind of questions every 10 years. Americans are used to answering questions, particularly questions that will lead to good representation in their community. It is going to lead to a good school board member, it will lead to some good elected representatives, it will lead to some good Congress persons. Now, that is not a trivial thing.

But there are some radio announcers and disk jockeys and pundits in this country who are making that just a trivial thing. It is not trivial when it affects your elected representatives that will go into a governing body and represent you. People keep saying, We don't have a voice. You do have a voice. Be counted and you will have a voice, because there will be enough of you to say, yes, we do deserve another Congressperson in our area; yes, we do deserve another State representative in our area; yes, we do deserve another school board member.

So it is irresponsible and irrational, as far as I am concerned, to tell people that it is optional; that they should not fill out all the forms or they should not fill out any of the forms. The time has come now. We have been talking about the census, and the gentlewoman from New York has led this thing notably and with great merit throughout this process. It is time now that our people step up to the plate.

They will not be able to talk, the pundits will not be able to talk about government does not do what it is supposed to do. They are the first to criticize government. They say government is not doing what it should do. Government wants to do it. It is a good thing if people go out and turn in their census form.

Now, I am a little embarrassed because the governor of my State has come out saying, "I take the same position as other Republicans do." Well, it is not a good idea, Mr. Governor, to say that you take that same position and that it is optional. Florida now has 23 representatives in this Congress. If our people do not go out and be counted, Mr. Governor, you may not have 23 Congresspersons another year from now.

So we are saying to all the people, support the census. Fill out the forms. It is not a cursory thing; it is not something that is fly by night and you can just flippant say, oh, no, we are not going to do it. It is important. Not only does the lifeblood of your community depend on it, your roads, your transportation, and your representation.

And particularly poor people and underserved people. My voice goes out to them every time I stand up. Turn the forms in. You will probably benefit from it more than a lot of other people because you depend on government for most of your basic services. Go to it; turn in those forms. If you need help, call the Census Bureau. If you need help, call your local Congressperson; wake them up. They are the ones depending on this count as well as you are.

So I do hope that everyone within the sound of our voices tonight will go out and be counted. The ball is in their court.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). The gentlewoman will suspend.

The Members will be reminded that it is not in order to characterize Senate action, nor is it in order during debate to specifically urge the Senate to take certain action.

Members will be also reminded that they should make their comments to the Chair and not to the listening or the viewing audience.

The gentlewoman may proceed.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, another of our colleagues, the gentlewoman from the great State of Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE), had a conflict and could not stay with us. She

was here, however, and I will submit her statement later for the RECORD.

Another colleague from Texas, however, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM), is here. This Member holds many leadership positions in this body. He is the ranking member on the Committee on Agriculture and is the policy chair of the Blue Dogs, in addition to being a leader in this body on getting a complete and accurate count during the census.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from New York for yielding to me to talk tonight about the general subject we have already heard our colleagues from California and Florida speaking about, and that is encouraging, Mr. Speaker, encouraging all Americans to fill out the form and to send it in.

I guess one of my disappointments tonight is that we do not have the time equally divided between Democrats and Republicans so that we might all stand up tonight and encourage people to fill out the forms and to send them in, instead of some divided voices that we have been hearing from lately, Mr. Speaker. I think that is not in the best interest of this House of Representatives. I hope that we, under the Speaker's leadership, will find ways to encourage all Americans to return their census forms.

As we have already heard, current figures indicate that 61 percent of all citizens have returned their forms. This is good news. But that means 39 percent have not. In Texas, unfortunately, we are running a bit behind the national average. As of last night, 57 percent of Texans have responded.

I want to single out a few counties in my district back home that are not doing as well as California was doing a moment ago, but we are exceeding the national averages: Hood County, Taylor County, Tom Green County, and Young County. So to those people living in towns like Granbury and Tolar, and Abilene and Merkel, and San Angelo and Graham and Olney, I commend you and encourage you to continue to publicize and to work to see that your neighbors in fact send their forms in.

It is all the more important for people in rural areas to respond to the census. In 1990, the census missed approximately 1.2 percent of all rural residents. We must have an accurate count for rural America also in order that we might receive our fair share of representation and tax dollars.

It is very disturbing to me when I look at my rural district and see that when we get outside of the more populated counties that I mentioned, that we are way behind in our response rate. This is disturbing and something that I hope we will in fact be counting soon.

The editors of the San Angelo Standard Times wrote about the importance of responding to the census in their March 15 editorial they wrote:

Texas probably lost a congressional seat in 1990 because an estimated 483,000 Texans either refused to be counted or were missed by

census takers. The State also lost nearly \$1 billion Federal funding, which is the other primary purpose of the census now, to determine how much money each State will receive for roads, education, health care and other programs.

Mr. Speaker, I would provide the full text of the editorial for the RECORD.

Now, I know there are some citizens that are concerned about the long form. The data is extremely important to administering Federal programs, everything from housing programs and community development grants to highways, education and health care. The Census Bureau uses long-form data as a baseline for every single economic indicator. Without an accurate baseline, we cannot produce the economic information to better serve our citizens.

The San Angelo Standard Times editors hit on this point as well when they wrote:

It is helpful to have a detailed snapshot of the country and the conditions its citizens are living in, because such information can be useful to policymakers. While it may be annoying, there is no real down side. All census information is confidential and by law cannot be shared either with other government agencies or private entities.

I think the important thing to point out to our constituents is the extensive privacy constraints that we, the Congress, have imposed on the census. Anyone who violates the law and discloses any individual household data will be subject to 5 years in prison and \$5,000 in fines. The Census Bureau has a great track record of protecting this data. In 1990, millions of questionnaires were processed without any breach of trust.

So, in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage all Americans, and in particular my constituents in west Texas, who have not returned their census forms to send them in today. It is not too late. You deserve to be counted, and it is in your community's best interest and it is in our Nation's best interest that we count every individual citizen of America so that our representation in this body and in the State legislatures around the country will be based on the most accurate information.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back to the gentlewoman from New York and submit herewith the text of the article I referred to above:

[From the San Angelo Standard Times, Mar. 15, 2000]

TAKE TIME TO FILL OUT CENSUS QUESTIONNAIRE

Some West Texans already have received their 2000 census forms, and the rest will be receiving them in the coming days.

Those who are ambivalent about filling out the forms need to remember a couple of things: There are many reasons to participate and, aside from the time it takes, not a single reason not to. And considering that the short form—which will go to 80 percent of households—takes only about 10 minutes to complete, the time argument doesn't hold much water for most people.

The census has occurred once each decade since the country's beginning. Originally the

purpose was to ensure proper representation—that is, since congressional seats are apportioned based on population, it was necessary to know how many people lived in each state to determine how many representatives it would send to the U.S. House of Representatives.

Texas probably lost a congressional seat in 1990 because an estimated 483,000 Texans either refused to be counted or were missed by census-takers. The state also lost nearly \$1 billion federal funding, which is the other primary purpose of the census now—to determine how much money each state will receive for roads, education, health care and other programs.

Both arguments for participating matter in San Angelo and Tom Green County as well. The local share of funding is lost for each person who fails to respond to the census. And with West Texas being tremendously outgrown by the rest of the state, our clout in this part of the state is diminished with each person that is missed.

For the first time, a local committee will undertake an aggressive outreach effort to try to limit the number of people who fall through the census cracks. Plans call for having offices where people can go to get help in filling out their census forms, and interpreters will be available for those newer arrivals who need assistance.

It's unfortunate that the Census Bureau got off to a bad start, putting an extra digit on addresses for letters that went out recently informing people that their forms would be arriving and erroneously sending out some information in foreign languages.

Still, that doesn't alter the importance of filling out and returning the forms, which, when compiled, will tell much about the nation at the turn of the century.

Some 15 million homes will receive the long form, which does take longer to fill out (about 38 minutes, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates) and does ask some questions that will cause many to wonder why they are necessary.

The answer is that it is helpful to have a detailed snapshot of the country and the conditions its citizens are living in, because such information can be useful to policymakers. While it may be annoying, there is no real downside—all census information is confidential and by law cannot be shared either with other government agencies or private entities.

Consider it a civic duty that pays dividends—and that only has to be performed once every decade.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his statement, and I would now like to yield to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS). He represents the 7th Congressional District in Maryland. The gentleman from Maryland chairs the Complete Count Committee for Baltimore and has served on really the oversight committee for the census, the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, and I thank him for his leadership on this issue.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman for all that she has done. Ever since the subcommittee was first formed, I remember that she made it clear that she was going to do everything in her power to make sure that we had a complete count, and she has continued to do that. I really thank her not just on behalf of the Congress of the United States of America but for all Ameri-

cans for what she has done. I really do appreciate it.

I also want to take a moment to recognize the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK), who just spoke. She has brought this matter to the attention of the African American people over and over again. It has been a major, major concern of the gentlewoman from Florida, and I want to thank her.

This morning, Mr. Speaker, I visited Windsor Hills Elementary School, and this is a school in my district which has a number of young people who are in special education, beneficiaries of Title I funds.

I watched those little children as they put their hands up to their hearts and said, "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic," and I watched them as they talked about this one Nation under God. As I watched them, I thought about a great writer who once said, "Our children are the living messages we send to a future we will never see," and I could not help but think about the census, because the census affects them. It will affect them for the next 10 years.

The fact is those first graders will, in the future, 10 years from now, be 11th graders. The question is how will they have benefited from our actions or fail to benefit from our inactions?

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Sadly, we have Members of Congress and prominent leaders of the Republican party telling the American public that the census is optional. I could not believe that.

On Friday, the Senate passed a sense of the Senate resolution essentially reinforcing the idea that not completing one's form is okay. It is not.

Further, Republican Presidential Nominee, Governor Bush has sided with the Republican majority in Congress that has objected to the use of modern scientific methods to provide accurate census data.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). The gentleman must be reminded not to characterize Senate actions.

The gentleman may proceed.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, as a candidate for the presidency, his opposition to using modern scientific methods sends a strong message that has outreached a minority community those traditionally undercounted is not genuine.

It is unfortunate but not surprising that compassionate conservatism does not include the community I represent. Currently, Baltimore City has a dismal 48 percent response rate. The target was 68 percent. Despite our best efforts, we cannot improve this rate nor ensure a complete and accurate census when constituents are bombarded with messages from elected officials that they do not have to fill out the form.

I urge naysayers to stop spreading these negative messages and encourage residents to fulfill their civic duty by completing and returning their census

forms. A complete and accurate Census 2000 will ensure that education, accessible health care, child care, access to jobs, and the protection of civil rights are available for all.

Again, those first-graders sitting there and then standing and pledging allegiance to the flag, where will they be in 10 years? What will they have accomplished if we do not do what we are supposed to do and fill out our forms? It is a simple act. And as I told some constituents the other day, when they fail to fill out that form and they have five people in their house, that means six people are not counted.

And so, Mr. Speaker, again our citizens deserve no less. I want to thank again the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) for yielding.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, our next speaker will be the gentleman from the 42nd Congressional District of California (Mr. BACA) the inland empire. But before he speaks, I would like to read a short quote from an editorial published in the Minneapolis Star Tribune on April 2.

A handful of conservative lawmakers in Washington have come up with a creative response. They're urging constituents to simply ignore the questions they don't like. That's a cynical and irresponsible approach from elected officials who should know better. The census long form might be a nuisance, but there is no question that it provides useful, sometimes required, information for Federal agencies to allocate taxpayer's money for private scholars to conduct research and for the government to serve citizens more effectively.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think anybody could have said it any better.

Mr. Speaker, I include the following entire editorial for the RECORD:

[From the Star Tribune, Apr. 2, 2000]

CENSUS RUCKUS; DON'T BOYCOTT THE LONG FORM

One in six American households has received the Census Bureau's dreaded "long form" in recent weeks, and most are reacting to its 52 detailed questions with an understandable combination of patience, impatience and procrastination.

But a handful of conservative lawmakers in Washington have come up with a more creative response. They're urging constituents to simply ignore the questions they don't like.

That's a cynical and irresponsible approach from elected officials who should know better. The census long form might be a nuisance, but there is no question that it provides useful—sometimes required—information for federal agencies to allocate taxpayers' money, for private scholars to conduct important research and for the government to serve citizens more effectively.

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott has led the attack, arguing that the census questionnaire is overlong and intrusive. But the Census Bureau has added only one item since 1990, and it provided all the questions for congressional review two years ago, as required by law.

Rep. Tom Coburn, R-Okla., says the questions are too personal. When pressed for an example last week, a Coburn aide cited a question about bathing habits. But it turns out that the question is actually about mental and physical disability. As a series of examples, the question asks whether the re-

spondent has a disability severe enough to interfere with schooling, holding a job or conducting normal household activities such as eating and bathing.

Granted, that's personal. But it's also a perfectly good example of the census' value. Washington hands out billions of dollars every year to disabled Americans, and every year skeptical lawmakers ask how many Americans are truly so disabled that they need government assistance.

The same could be said for the billions of dollars that Washington spends every year on highways, parks, mortgage subsidies, tuition assistance and so forth. It would be irresponsible for Congress to spend the money without good data on the nation's housing stock, travel habits, recreation needs and educational deficiencies. And that says nothing about the small army of scholars who will dig into census data in coming years to conduct important research on health care, mobility, poverty, education and countless other subjects.

Lott and Coburn say their constituents don't trust the Census Bureau to keep their answers confidential. But responsible leaders would not inflame groundless suspicions. They would remind their constituents of the Census Bureau's excellent 200-year records of vigorously protecting the confidentiality of personal information.

What's most depressing about the Lott-Coburn critique is that it's one more effort to depict the government as an enemy of the people, not an extension of their will. Americans who want their government to function more effectively should support a thorough census. A sophisticated society cannot function without good information about itself. And for those busy souls who haven't labored through the long form yet, we trust they'll approach the task more responsibly than some of their leaders in Washington.

Last Friday, the Senate passed a misguided Sense of the Senate resolution that will only encourage more Americans not to participate in this critically important civic ceremony.

Ironically, many of the Senators raising questions also cosponsored an amendment offered by Senator HELMS which would have asked every American what their marriage status was. Those Senators should realize that they cannot have it both ways.

It is much too late to be raising these questions.

At this time, I would like to read a few quotes from an editorial published in the Minneapolis Star-Tribune on April 2nd.

A handful of conservative lawmakers in Washington have come up with a creative response. They're urging constituents to simply ignore the questions they don't like. That's a cynical and irresponsible approach from elected officials who should know better. The census long form might be a nuisance, but there is no question that it provides useful—sometimes required—information for federal agencies to allocate taxpayer's money, for private scholars to conduct research, and for the government to serve citizens more effectively.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. BACA).

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to thank the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) for doing an outstanding job in getting out the word to all American people of the responsibility that we have in assuring that every American is counted. It has taken a lot of effort and a lot of time on her part. I commend her for her part, because she realizes the impor-

tance of what it means to our Nation to have everyone counted. She is to be commended for her leadership, her vision, and her foresight in assuring that every State receives its fair share of dollars. And the only way that it is going to be done is by doing an accurate count.

By doing an accurate count, I am really appalled at what is going on and am outraged by what is going on or has been suggested by parties on one particular side that has said that it is optional to count. It is not optional. It is our responsibility, it is everybody's responsibility, it is Americans' responsibility to make sure that we all are counted. It is irresponsible and unpatriotic not to be counted.

Let me tell my colleagues I stand here as a veteran, a veteran who has served our country, and many other veterans who have served us, they believe they have fought to assure that we enjoy those freedoms that we enjoy today because they were willing to put themselves and to sacrifice, that we enjoy those freedoms today to make sure that everyone is counted, that everyone enjoys the freedom that we have to assure they participate in our American democracy.

They cannot participate in that American democracy if they do not participate and they are not counted. I ask every individual to participate. We now have had 61 percent of individuals that participated at this point. That is not enough. We need 35 percent additional of the total of Americans to participate in filling out their forms. We need every individual to fill out their form.

We are in an information age. We need reliable information in order to make good decisions for this Nation. Without good data, we cannot administer the laws of this country fairly.

The Census Bureau has long forms on a baseline for every single economic independent indicator to be published. Without an accurate baseline, we cannot produce economic information needed to run this Nation's economics effectively.

Not too long ago, I came here and was elected during a special election. I voted for the budget at that time. It was the first budget that I ever voted for. It was approximately a \$790 trillion budget. When I look at that budget, I am saying, how much of that money is coming back to California? In California we have continued to do an undercount.

In Fontana recently, we have had a lot of growth and development in that area. We need to make sure that we do have an accurate count in that immediate area. We are going to lose a lot of funding that goes back, monies that need to go back for education, monies that need to go back for parks and recreation, monies that need to go back for special ed, monies that need

to go back for infrastructure and transportation, monies that need to go back for health services, monies that need to go back for senior citizens.

If we do not do an accurate count, we will not get the monies that we deserve. It is our responsibility to make sure that we receive the funding that is necessary for all of us. It cannot happen unless we take our responsibility.

I urge all Americans to make sure they fulfill their obligation, they take that responsibility. We are in a country where we have those freedoms. Many other individuals do not have those freedoms. We have the freedom to complete the form and look at every dollar that we reserve.

If California wants to reserve its dollars to get back what it deserves, we need to make sure that an accurate count is done. The only way that California will get the additional dollars is that we make sure we do that count.

We have 52 Members in the State of California. We need to continue to make sure we ask for an accurate count. We need to make sure that blacks, Hispanics, Asian-Americans, the American-Indian population, and the total population is actually counted. We need all of them to participate, to make sure they do fill out their forms, that they are not frightened and sabotaged by anyone telling them not to complete the form. I ask them to please complete the form. We urge them. It is important for this Nation. It is important for our country.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I put a brief quote in from the Atlanta Journal Constitution on April 3. It says, "Participation in the census may also be harmed by the political grandstanding it continues to inspire." Presidential candidate George W. Bush has criticized the long census sent to one in six American households as some sort of government intrusion on privacy.

However, the Census Bureau takes very seriously its responsibility to keep individual responses absolutely confidential. Leakers inside will be sought out and prosecuted. And hackers on the outside have not been able to get in. If they were caught, they would be prosecuted. In fact, the Bureau is working with leading computer security experts to make sure its data remains untapped.

Mr. Speaker, I include the entire article for the RECORD:

[From the Atlanta Journal Constitution, Apr. 3, 2000]

CONSTITUTION: KEEP THE CENSUS FROM BECOMING POLITICAL FODDER AND PARTICIPATE

Roughly half of America's households did their civic duty and answered the U.S. Census Bureau's Year 2000 postal survey by its April 1 deadline. That level of participation is not nearly good enough if America is to get the accurate picture of itself essential to governing fairly and efficiently at local, state and federal levels.

Fortunately, the bureau still has a "final, final deadline" for mail and e-mail replies. It's April 11, the day it will send out its enumerators to count Americans who didn't re-

spond. So if you have yet to fill out your census form, please do so and mail it this week.

Participation in the census may also be harmed by the political grandstanding it continues to inspire. Presidential candidate George W. Bush and Senate Majority Leader TRENT LOTT (R-Miss.) have criticized the long census—sent to one in six American households—as some sort of government intrusion on privacy.

However, the Census Bureau takes very seriously its responsibility to keep individual census responses confidential. Leakers inside will be sought out and prosecuted, as will hackers on the outside. In fact, the bureau is working with leading computer-security experts to make sure its data remain untapped.

Is this year's census survey exceptionally burdensome or intrusive, as its critics suggest? No, the questions on the long form are almost all similar to those asked in previous censuses, including the 1990 census conducted when Bush's father was president. And every question on this year's long form was presented to members of Congress for their comments two years ago. To find fault with those queries at this late date is a cheap shot.

The information being gathered will be used to redraw political districts, calculate how government benefits like Medicare are to be shared equitably, and predict public needs such as mass transit, roads, libraries, schools, fire and police protection. Census figures from 1990 helped federal emergency officials determine quickly where shelters were most needed after Hurricane Andrew smashed south Florida in 1993.

The alternative, as urged by Bush, Lott & Co., would be to operate government uninformed of its people's needs.

Mr. Speaker, the next speaker is the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD) a leader not only in the census but in the Women's Caucus. She is the co-chair of the Women's Caucus.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Speaker, let me first thank this outstanding Member out of the State of New York (Mrs. MALONEY) who not only leads the census and has been absolutely strong in her deliberations on this issue but is the chairwoman of the Woman's Caucus. She, too, understands, Mr. Speaker, that of the 4 million people who were undercounted, 50 percent of those were our children.

And so, this is why, Mr. Speaker, I am appalled a leading presumptive presidential candidate, a man aspiring to lead this great Nation, cannot figure out whether he will fill out his own confidential census form. This is the same man who wants to take charge of the American people and its government to make public policy based on population figures that affect our daily lives in health, education, transportation, appropriations, and other public responsibilities.

Carrying out his own education proposal unveiled last week would depend upon, Mr. Speaker, accurate data that all of the census produces. How does he plan to produce an accurate Consumer Price Index without accurate long form data? Still, he has not committed enough to government fairness to fill out one of these forms himself.

Now, I have worked with the Census Bureau now for about 2 years to make

sure that they count every hard-to-count group. I spearheaded a special project to make sure Africans and Caribbean residents in the Diaspora understood the importance of the census and trusted our laws of confidentiality governing the process.

I also called on homeless shelters, battered women shelters, colleges, universities, and families with children to make sure that we count them, because they will have been historically undercounted individuals.

Shame on any elected official who would undermine our Nation's effort to gather vital information we need for appropriations and planning. The census numbers are extremely important to Government leaders.

In 1990, the census undercounted 486,000 persons in the State of Texas, causing that State to lose about \$1 billion in Federal funding for health care, housing, transportation, and other Federal programs. Even California lost \$2.3 billion, Mr. Speaker, and a congressional seat.

Children, the target of this presidential candidate's education reform package, are one of the most undercounted groups in America. How many of them fell through the cracks in Texas this past decade because of underfunded public services? It seems, out of self-interest, one would want an accurate assessment of one's home State.

Remember, these same officials who do not want residents filling out census forms oppose using modern scientific methods for a more accurate census count.

Come now, they cannot have it both ways. If all public leaders, no matter what party affiliation, would encourage every resident to fill out and return their forms, we could get the results we need, Mr. Speaker.

Maybe those now questioning the census have other motives for spoiling an accurate census count. Maybe they do not want a true accurate count. Frankly, this reminds me of the 1980s, when South African apartheid government decided not to count the majority of African people as South Africans. Did undercounting tens of thousands of residents who were not acceptable but lived in Johannesburg make them go away? Did it drive down actual unemployment figures and increase the real infant mortality rate? Of course not. This statistical chicanery only lets those in power fool themselves to the realities they need to face.

The Census Bureau has done a great job and has gone to great lengths to carry out the mandates of Congress to make sure the forms are as brief as possible. In fact, the long form is shorter than the 1990 form by four questions and it is the shortest form in history.

My friends, this is the information age. We need the data from these forms to administer our public duty in this country fairly. Those encouraging citizens to voluntarily suppress an accurate count are doing it as a grave disservice to their State and to Americans across this Nation.

As leaders, they should know the laws of confidentiality governing the census in our great country. This is our process governed by our laws that our courts have upheld. Reasonable and sensible officials swear to uphold the law. And this law has never been violated. Let us stop playing games, my friends, with America's future. Follow the advice of sensible leaders in all political parties. Fill out that census form, and encourage everyone who comes within their purview to do the same.

I thank again the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) for her leadership.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS), a member of the Census Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Reform. He has been fighting for an accurate census through two threatened government shutdowns and a flood relief bill held hostage. He fought against the designation of the census as an emergency.

The census has been around since the beginning of our Nation, and he fought every day to get the funding for the census. He is continuing as one of our outstanding leaders for a complete and accurate count. I thank him for all of his hard work.

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Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, as I have listened to the discussion this evening, I have been thrilled and delighted. First of all, I want to commend the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) for her continuing outstanding leadership day after day, night after night. The gentlewoman talks about leaving no stone unturned. She is talking about taking a message to the American people. I really do not think, I say to the gentlewoman, that anybody has ever put more into an issue, into an idea, into a concept than what she has displayed during these last 2 years of trying to make sure that there is an accurate count, an honest count, and that everybody person in this country is, indeed, counted.

Mr. Speaker, I thank her, along with all of those who have expressed all of their appreciation. Listening to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD), I said to myself, if I was not going to fill out the form, listening to the gentlewoman from California that would have caused me to grab up a pencil, a pen, or whatever it was that I could get my hands on, and run to that form and fill it out.

Unfortunately, there are many people in our country who do not understand the importance. I represent a district that has over 165,000 people who live at or below the level of poverty. Obviously, many of these individuals are at the lower end of the socioeconomic scale, many of them, obviously, are not as well-educated as some other people. Obviously, many of them do not understand. I want to thank all of the people in my community, the

churches who have been making the announcements, who have been trying to convince people on a regular basis, the volunteers who went out with me on Saturday.

We ran into people who just did not understand. I ran into one woman who said to us, you know, I am saved and sanctified and filled with the Holy Spirit, and I am not going to fill out these forms. I said to myself, yes, you will be saved and sanctified and broke, filled with the Holy Spirit and your children cannot get daycare. And the Holy Spirit is going to help you do a lot of things, but the Holy Spirit is not going to put a daycare center in your neighborhood so that your grandchildren can go and get early childhood education.

Mr. Speaker, I ran into people who said to us that they did not get the forms, and I looked in their hallways, and there were the forms on the floor. I said, well, you did not get it, but it is here; you have got to pick it up and fill it out and send in the information.

I ran into people who said that we filled it out on the first floor, but the people on the second floor, I am not sure that they got one.

I make a plea to all Americans, notwithstanding anything that anybody else might say, and, yes, I have some problems with those who would encourage people not to fill the forms out, but the real responsibility is on each and every one of us.

We have an old saying in my community that if you fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me. Notwithstanding what anybody might say, whether they are elected, appointed, community activists who just do not understand, anybody that is encouraging you or suggesting that you should not fill out your form, then, they do not have your interests at heart.

You have got to say the way that they say at the church that I attend: it is not my mother, it is not my father, but it is me oh, Lord. It is not the deacon. It is not the preacher, but it is me. It is not the Democrats. It is not the Republicans. It is not the House. It is not the Senate, it is my form, and if I do not fill out my form, then it means that I do not count.

So I thank the gentlewoman from New York for her leadership, for all that she has done. Please, Americans, please, residents of the 7th Congressional District in the State of Illinois, please make absolutely certain that you count by filling out the form, because if you do not, then all of America loses.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Illinois. I think what he just said he said it beautifully. Added to his words are Senator JOHN MCCAIN who recently exhibited the kind of leadership all Members of Congress should emulate, when he urged all Americans to fill out the entire census form.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. I congratulate certain Members of the other

body who are urging everybody to fill out the form.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman will suspend. The gentlewoman may not characterize legislative positions of Members of the other body.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of my special order today.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the House that many of the questions are essentially the same questions approved by former President Ronald Reagan and President Bush, except that they are less than the questions in 1990. I would ask some of my more conservative Members to think about that before they criticize the census.

In the information age, we need reliable information in order to make good decisions for this Nation. Some Members of Congress must be stuck in the 18th century. They do not seem to want to know how America is doing. Without good data, you cannot administer the laws of this country fairly. Their comments are rash and inappropriate.

The good news for the census is that the Census Bureau is following the law. It will try to get the long form questions answered, because the professionals at the bureau do what the law says, the law Congress passes. They go out and try to get an accurate picture of this country and report back to Congress. I guess we now know why the 2000 census was designated an emergency in last year's budget. We just did not know that some Members of Congress were the ones who would be creating the emergency.

On average, the long form takes a little over half an hour to complete. Only information needed to manage or evaluate government programs is collected by the census. Just a half an hour every 10 years for good data on your country, a photograph of where your country is going. The short form just takes several minutes, just several minutes to be a good citizen. \$180 billion a year in Federal money depends on census data. That is close to \$2 trillion over the decade. Clearly that is reason enough to fill out the long form which, by the way, goes to only one in six American households.

As I said, Members should remember that they were informed of the questions that would be in the census over 2 years ago. Every single Member got a book that had every question, they had the reason for the question, and they had the congressional law that required it. They had an opportunity to criticize or complain then. But that

time has passed. Now is the time to urge everyone to participate in this civic ceremony together as one Nation. It is your future. Do not leave it blank. Please fill out the form.

Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD a series of editorials across the country from Seattle to Washington, Sacramento, Palm Beach, Minneapolis, Atlanta; David Broder in the Washington Post; Gail Collins, New York Times; Los Angeles, USA Today, Atlanta Journal; along with many, many other articles that have come out in support of being good citizens and filling out the long form, being part of an accurate census.

[From the Seattle Times Company, March 29, 2000]

OVERLY OVERWROUGHT ABOUT THE 2000 CENSUS

On any given day, citizens are bombarded with dozens of legitimate, stress-producing worries. The U.S. Census Bureau, even its much-maligned long-form questionnaire, ought not be one of them.

Census questionnaires have been mailed to 120 million American households. The seven-question short form was sent to most households; a longer, more-detailed, 52-question form was delivered to one in six households.

Then the yowling began—The Snoops! The invasion of privacy!

The complaints are nine parts hype, one part hoey.

Two important developments have occurred since the last census was taken in 1990. The long form got shorter by four questions, and talk radio got louder.

In fairness to those with census jitters, more people nowadays are concerned about personal privacy. Frequent calls by solicitors and marketing companies wear down a person's patience and goodwill.

Remember, though, the census is the head count prescribed by the Constitution.

The people who make money by whipping up fear—and those who buy into it—substitute paranoia for logic.

The loudest concerns focus on question 31 on the long form, which asks people to report wages, salaries, commissions, bonuses or tips from jobs. This is not a scary question. The federal government, the Internal Revenue Service, already knows the answer for individuals. The Census Bureau is looking for data to report in the aggregate.

Before people allow themselves to be whipped into an unnecessary froth, remember the manner in which the data is reported. It is much like a series of USA Today headlines, "We're older," "We're more mobile, more diverse" and so on. The census doesn't announce that Joe Dokes at 123 Pine Street does or says anything. Nor does the Census Bureau share personal information with other agencies.

The questions provide a telling snapshot of America and help determine how large pots of tax dollars are spent on social programs, highways and mass transit, and how congressional seats are distributed among the states. Smile. A big family portrait is being painted with numbers. Nothing scary about that.

[From the Tulsa World, March 30, 2000]

COBURN: DOWN FOR THE COUNT

Rep. Tom Coburn is never going to come to his census. Count on it.

But the Second District Republican congressman should admit that the appropriate time to protest queries on the long form of the Census 2000 questionnaire was more than

two years ago when the questions, all required by law (and who passes law?) were circulated among members of Congress.

On Wednesday, Coburn essentially urged his Second District constituents to violate federal law by refusing to complete certain portions of their long-form questionnaires. One in six homes receives the long form.

"The Census Bureau's desire for information is out of control and a violation of privacy rights," Coburn said, adding, however, that his constituents should answer the "essential" questions on the short form covering a person's name, sex, age, relationship, Hispanic origin and race.

The long form asks 27 more questions about 34 subjects, including marital status, income, mode of transportation to work and work status for the past year.

Coburn said that if a census worker shows up to collect omitted information, Oklahomans should "politely refuse" to give it.

Coburn's position doesn't square with that of Gov. Frank Keating and other leaders who have encouraged Oklahomans to fill out the forms so that the state can receive the largest share possible of the \$2 trillion in federal funds that are handed out on the basis of census figures. Some of the questions in the long form help agencies calculate the specific needs of a community.

"While I understand the reservations that some Oklahomans may have with regard to some of the questions on the long-form census questionnaire, I urge them to complete and promptly return the entire form to the census bureau," Keating said.

Coburn took his position after receiving complaints that long forms were invasive. He accused the census bureau of being "out of control" and of violating Americans' privacy.

Even some other conservative members of the Oklahoma congressional delegation, including Rep. Steve Largent and U.S. Sens. Don Nickles and James Inhofe, do not appear to embrace Coburn's position.

If the Census Bureau is asking too many nosy questions, the time to protest is before the questions become law, not in the middle of a census. We should be able to count on our elected officials to know what's going on in time to do something about it.

[From the Virginian-Pilot (Norfolk, VA), March 30, 2000]

HEAD COUNT: YOU'VE GOT UNTIL SATURDAY TO TACKLE THOSE CENSUS QUESTIONS

I am one of the army of people hired to help answer questions about the 2000 census. Many people receiving the long form understand the questions but are reluctant to provide answers. They feel the government "already knows too much about my personal life and income. And why do they want to know how many flush toilets I have or how much it costs to heat my home?"

There are reasons for including these questions as an adjunct to the main purpose of the census, which is to get a head count of all people residing in the United States on April 1, 2000. Let me try to allay some of the misconceptions.

First, the data is absolutely confidential. Nobody, not the President, the Supreme Court, the FBI, the INS or any local police department, will ever have access to your individual questionnaire. All census workers are sworn to maintain the confidentiality of the data provided, under penalty of a stiff fine and a prison term. This confidentiality has not been breached since the census started in 1790.

Second, the answers that you provide are compiled into statistics, which are then made available to the public and all governmental agencies. These statistics are used to determine how to distribute about \$200 bil-

lion per year of federal funds to schools, employment services, housing assistance, highway construction, hospital services, child and elderly programs.

When the data show, for instance, that the city of Chesapeake has had phenomenal growth since the past census, additional funding to Chesapeake will be forthcoming in many of the above categories.

Why the questions about toilets and heating costs? The statistical data on plumbing facilities is used by the U.S. agriculture and housing departments to determine rural development policy, grants for residential property rehabilitation and identification of areas for housing rehabilitation loans.

Knowledge derived from the census is essential also to the drawing of samples for all kinds of surveys, for the computation of birth and death rates and the making of actuarial tables, and for the analysis of economic development and business cycles. Above all, the census makes possible the estimation of future trends and is therefore part of all kinds of planning—national, state, local, tribal, citizen groups, business and industry.

Please take the extra time to answer the seemingly "personal" questions on your census long form. The official deadline is Saturday. After April 11, you may be visited by a census enumerator if you failed to return your questionnaire. Please don't shoot the messenger. We'll only be doing our job because you didn't do yours.

EDWARD SAMSON,
Chesapeake.

[From the Washington Post, March 31, 2000]

CENSUS BASHING

The Census always produces complaints that an intrusive government is asking for more information than it has a right to know. Usually the complaints are scattered and come the fringe. But this year some radio show hosts have taken up the issue, and now some national politicians who otherwise yield to none in insisting on law and order are telling constituents not to answer questions they feel invade their privacy.

The Senate majority leader, Trent Lott, is one such. He believes that people ought to provide "the basic census information" but that if they "feel their privacy is being invaded by [some] questions, they can choose not to answer," his spokesman says. Likewise Sen. Chuck Hagel, whose "advice to everybody is just fill out what you need to fill out, and [not] anything you don't feel comfortable with." Yesterday, George W. Bush said that, if sent the so-called form, he isn't sure he would fill it out, either.

And which are the questions that offend these statesmen? One that has been mocked seeks to determine how many people are disabled as defined by law, in part by asking whether any have "difficulty . . . dressing, bathing, or getting around inside the home." When it mailed the proposed census questions to members of Congress for comment two years ago—and got almost no response—the bureau explained that this one would be used in part to distribute housing funds for the disabled, funds to the disabled elderly and funds to help retrain disabled veterans. Are those sinister enterprisers? A much-decried question about plumbing facilities is used in part "to locate areas in danger of ground water contamination and waterborne diseases"; one about how people get to work is used in transportation planning. All have been asked for years.

Earlier this year, Mr. Lott's Senate complained 94 to 0 that a question about marital status had been removed from the basic census form. That was said to be a sign of disrespect for marriage. Come on. This is a critical period for the census. All kinds of harm

will be done if the count is defective. A politician not seeking to score cheap political points at public expense might resist the temptation to demagogue and instead urge citizens to turn in their forms. But in an election year such as this, that's apparently too high a standard for some.

[From the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel,
March 31, 2000]

CENSUS TOO IMPORTANT TO IGNORE

It seems that lots of people are complaining about having to answer what they claim are invasive questions on this year's census form. Of course, some of these are people who willingly give their credit card numbers to telemarketers offering the latest in siding or to Internet sites that sell really cool lava lamps.

There are also plenty of members of Congress who are now all in a huff, saying they sympathize with citizens who are threatening to refuse to fill out the forms. One wonders what these guardians of the public good were doing when they reviewed—and apparently approved of—the same census questions they are now complaining about. And where they were 10 years ago, when the questions were virtually the same.

The fact is, it's important to fill out the census so the government has an accurate count and so the average citizen has adequate representation in Washington and receives his or her fair share of federal funds.

Admittedly, some of the questions are goofy, and threats to privacy should be of concern to everyone. But asking how many toilets you have is hardly sinister. Besides, the government already knows. Just ask your local assessor.

Government also already knows what race you are and whether you are a veteran. It keeps records on those kinds of things, just as businesses keep records of your commercial transactions.

It's easy to rail against government, but the greatest threat to privacy is not found in government census forms, but in the vast databases being built by private companies about their customers and potential customers.

Want something to worry about? Go to the Internet and search for information about yourself. What some of you may learn there is really scary.

And since the census gives the nation a profile of itself, determines the number of representatives a state has in Congress and decides where federal funds are distributed, the information serves a larger public purpose than that gathered by eBay or Amazon.com.

It is OK to be annoyed by the government for asking all these fool questions. But it's important to fill out the form and make sure the annoying information is at least accurate. Besides, the Census Bureau is barred by law from sharing its information about individuals for three-quarters of a century.

So the information on your toilets will be safe for at least that long.

[From the New York Times, April 1, 2000]

CIVIC DUTY AND THE CENSUS

Some Congressional Republicans are seriously undermining the 2000 census by suggesting that the national head count, which officially takes place today, is an invasion of privacy. That bizarre complaint could discourage the public from participating in a project that is crucial to the functioning of state and federal government. The questions on this year's census form—including questions on household income, plumbing facilities and physical disabilities—have been part of the census for decades. The only new question asks for information on grandparents

who are caregivers for children. In fact, this year's long form is the shortest one in 60 years. All answers on census forms are kept confidential. Yet Senator Chuck Hagel of Nebraska has suggested in recent days that people can simply ignore questions on the long form—which goes to one out of six American households—that they find intrusive. A spokesman for Senator Trent Lott, the majority leader, has made similarly inappropriate suggestions. Gov. George W. Bush of Texas has said that people should fill out the forms, but that if he received a long form, he was not sure he would want to fill it out either. These comments are irresponsible. Completing the census form fully and accurately is not optional; it is a civic duty that is required by law. Senator Hagel now says that he does not want to encourage people to break the law, but will introduce legislation to make most of the questions on the long form voluntary.

The federal government has spent billions of dollars trying to produce an accurate count as response rates have continued to decline with each decennial count. Accuracy is critical because the census is used to apportion seats in Congress, draw legislative districts within the states and distribute more than \$185 billion in Federal funds. The government uses information from the long form of the census to allocate money to communities for housing, school aid, transportation, services for the elderly and the disabled and scores of other programs. The data are also necessary to calculate the consumer price index and cost of living increases in government benefits.

When individuals fail to give complete information about their households, they risk shortchanging their communities of government aid that they may be entitled to. That is why many state and local government officials are working hard to increase census response rates in their communities. The mindless complaints of some politicians could well sabotage those efforts.

[From the Sacramento Bee, April 1, 2000]

TRASHING THE CENSUS: IRRESPONSIBLE BUSH COMMENTS COULD SABOTAGE COUNT

Just two days ago before Census Day, as U.S. Census Bureau officials were urging Americans to cooperate in the crucial once-in-a-decade national count, Texas Gov. George W. Bush made their job harder. If he had the long census form, Bush told a campaign crowd, he's not sure he'd want to fill it out either. How harmful to this important civic exercise, how irresponsible and unpatriotic.

Bush's remarks come on the heels of Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott's advice to his fellow Americans not to answer any questions on the census long form that they believe invade their privacy. Taken together, those remarks by the leading Republican in Congress and the likely Republican presidential nominee can easily be interpreted as a deliberate attempt to sabotage the 2000 census. They raise questions about the integrity of the census that are unwarranted, unfair and irresponsible.

Once in six households receives the census long form. Beyond the basic eight questions about the number, age, and gender and race or ethnicity of people living in the household, the long form asks other questions designed to measure the well-being of Americans, to help government agencies to plan where to put schools or highways or health funding. Included in the long forms are 53 questions such as. How many bedrooms in the house? Has anyone been disabled by health problems in the last six months? Is there a telephone? What is the income of the household? Is there indoor plumbing?

By law the responses are strictly confidential. The U.S. Census cannot share individual household answers with the IRS, FBI, INS or any other government agency or private entity.

Moreover, every single question on the long and short forms is there because of a specific statutory requirement. Most of these questions have been on the form for decades. The only new question added since 1990 was put there at the behest of Republicans in Congress, including Lott. It asks grandparents whether they are caregivers for their grandchildren. The wording of each question was reviewed by Congress in 1997 and 1998. Lott, who now raises objections, pushed a resolution urging the Census Bureau to return to the short form a question about marital status that it had moved to the long form.

The census is the law of the land, enacted by the first Congress. When Bush says he wouldn't fill out the form, he's saying he's prepared to break the law. When Lott advises Americans not to answer questions they don't want to answer, he's telling them to break the law. And although both Lott and Bush limit their specific objections to the long form, the impact will inevitably reverberate more widely—to those who only receive the short form.

In Sacramento, census officials report that the response to the census is already lagging. Only 39 percent of Sacramento households have returned the form so far. Every man, woman or child not counted costs \$1,600 in lost federal funds. That's money that would go to our schools and highways and mental health and police protection.

Participating in the census is a civic duty, like voting, serving on juries and defending the country. As duties go, it's not burdensome, for most people, filling out the long form is a once-in-a-lifetime chore. With their thoughtless comments that feed mindless anti-government sentiment—do they really think they can govern better by knowing less about America?—Bush and Lott have done a disservice to the census and the country.

[From the Palm Beach Post, April 1, 2000]

THE CENSUS FOLLIES

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., should just be quiet about the census. Greenacres has a complaint. Sen. Lott doesn't.

The Census Bureau, once again, overlooked at least 1,500 apartments in Greenacres, which were fairly new when it missed them 10 years ago. The city, apparently tucked out of government's sight in west-central Palm Beach County, worked with census officials to make sure everyone is counted. The city has a gripe.

Sen. Lott, and some others, now say the long census form, which went to one household in six, is terribly intrusive. Sen. Lott said recipients can list name and address but "choose not to answer" other questions. He didn't complain in 1997, when he and all members of Congress received a copy of this year's long form for gathering data that they had ordered. And guess who cosponsored the law requiring a line on the form for marital status?

But three years ago, Sen. Lott was in court with other Republicans insisting on an "actual enumeration," counting individuals, and no use of sampling techniques. If people take his advice now, the Census Bureau will have to get the information Congress requires in the off-years, by sampling. Maybe by then, it will be able to find Greenacres.

[From the Chattanooga Times/Free Press, Apr. 1, 2000]

DON'T LEAVE CENSUS FORM BLANK

After months of preparation, today marks Census Day, when our national head count moves into higher gear.

Questionnaires have been mailed to every household. With much riding on a full and accurate count, it's significant to look at how we are responding.

As of March 29, 46 percent of households across the country had already completed and returned their forms. Comparable rates of response were 43 percent in Tennessee and 41 percent in Georgia. Hamilton County, at 47 percent, leads the five counties in our metropolitan area. Within the county, the town of Signal Mountain shines with a 59 percent response rate. In contrast, the city of Chattanooga lags with 44 percent answering.

These are only preliminary reports and will be updated daily. The more meaningful measurements will come on April 27, when Census 2000 enumerators will initiate a series of follow-up visits and calls to households that have failed to complete their forms.

By that time, local Census officials expect to have over 60 percent of questionnaires returned. The higher the rate of response, the sooner they can focus their efforts on counting population groups and neighborhoods that are harder to reach.

There are plenty of excuses for not complying, but most of them are not valid. Some people just hate paperwork. Yet the short form that went to five out of six households takes only 10 minutes or less to complete.

Some fear creeping big-government intrusion. The longer forms include some questions that may be helpful for statistical purposes, but many citizens find them too nosy about their personal lives and home conditions.

Some census questions do go too far, arousing opposition. And some people will question the promised confidentiality of their records. By law, no individual response (only aggregated information) can be legally reported to any other agency of government.

An official count has taken place every 10 years since 1790. The census is required by the Constitution solely for the purpose of fairly dividing U.S. House of Representatives seats among the states on a population basis, and dividing among the states the votes in the Electoral College, which actually elects our presidents following the popular vote.

But also of great importance is the fact that billions of dollars of your tax money are distributed according to the census count, with more money going where the count is higher.

Amazingly, some heads of households will forget to include the names and ages of their children. An estimated 7,000 people were missed in Hamilton County alone during the last census. The children in those households, if counted, would have demonstrated the need for our new schools and 139 new teachers. Overcrowding of schools and classrooms seems a heavy price to pay for parental omission.

With Census Day upon us, let's resolve to do our personal part to get it right this time. Count us all in.

[From the Memphis Commercial Appeal, Apr. 2, 2000]

CENSUS—POLITICAL BASHING WON'T HELP ACHIEVE FULL COUNT

Mississippi has the lowest response rate of any state so far to this year's federal census: 38 percent as of late last week—and 48 percent in DeSoto County—compared to a 50 percent national rate. (Memphis has nothing to brag about, either, just 39 percent of Memphians have returned their census forms.)

At the same time, Mississippi is threatened with the loss of one of its five U.S. House seats in the population-based reapportionment that will follow the 2000 Census. So you'd think that officials throughout the state would be bending over backward to urge residents to take part in the fullest and most accurate count possible.

Why, then, did Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) propose that citizens refuse to answer any census questions they find too "invasive"? Although the senator insists he supports maximum participation in the census, it's easy to see how people who already are suspicious of the federal government might interpret Lott's suggestion as an invitation to blow off their civic—and legal—duty to take part in the national headcount.

Census bashing has become something of a national sport in recent days, as critics such as Lott allege that the initiative too often amounts to an invasion of privacy. Texas Gov.—and presumptive Republican presidential nominee—George W. Bush said last week that if he had gotten the long (53 question) census form that one of every six households has received, he wasn't sure he would fill it out.

These defenses of personal privacy ignore the fact that members of Congress reviewed each of the questions that appear on the long and short census forms two years ago. Instead of striking "intrusive" questions then, senators voted unanimously this year to protest the Census Bureau's removal of a question about martial status.

So it ill behooves lawmakers such as Lott to complain now about the questionnaire. Remember, too, that many lawmakers have opposed the use of statistical sampling to correct the census undercount of millions of Americans because they said it would violate the "integrity" of the process they now condemn.

It's understandable that some Americans might object to revealing their income on the census questionnaire, although individual census data must remain confidential as a matter of law. It's timeconsuming to gather the information needed to answer some of the long-form questions accurately, such as annual utility and insurance costs.

But many of the questions routinely ridiculed by census bashers—whether residents of a given household have indoor plumbing, whether they have difficulty dressing or bathing, how they commute to work—have been asked in previous censuses without generating controversy. This year's long form has six fewer questions than the 1990 version.

The questions will yield data that will help federal officials fairly distribute aid to help disabled Americans, to fight water pollution and to improve local transportation planning. Are these illegitimate activities?

Bush has proposed allowing parents to use federal Title I money under some circumstances to send their children to private or charter schools. That money is distributed according to census data.

Many Mid-South residents insist they haven't returned their census forms yet because they haven't gotten them. If that is a systematic problem, then the Census Bureau must deal with it, fast.

But that is different matter from encouraging citizens not to cooperate fully with the national enumeration.

Census officials are making special efforts to get millions of households to return their census forms this weekend. In light of the complaints, Census Director Kenneth Prewitt said he fears many Americans have decided "this information is not very important at all."

Americans have learned to their chagrin that there isn't an issue, even the constitutionally mandated census, that politicians

can't turn into a matter of partisan division, especially in an election year.

But how will Sen. Lott respond if Mississippi, because of a below-average census count this year, does wind up losing a House seat?

And what is it's Republican seat?

[From the Atlanta Journal Constitution, Apr. 3, 2000]

CONSTITUTION: KEEP THE CENSUS FROM BECOMING POLITICAL FODDER AND PARTICIPATE

Roughly half of America's households did their civic duty and answered the U.S. Census Bureau's Year 2000 postal survey by its April 1 deadline. That level of participation is not nearly good enough if America is to get the accurate picture of itself essential to governing fairly and efficiently at local, state and federal levels.

Fortunately, the bureau still has a "final, final deadline" for mail and e-mail replies. It's April 11, the day it will send out its enumerators to count Americans who didn't respond. So if you have yet to fill out your census form, please do so and mail it this week.

Participation in the census may also be harmed by the political grandstanding it continues to inspire. Presidential candidate George W. Bush and Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) have criticized the long census—sent to one in six American households—as some sort of government intrusion on privacy.

However, the Census Bureau takes very seriously its responsibility to keep individual census responses confidential. Leakers inside will be sought out and prosecuted, as will hackers on the outside. In fact, the bureau is working with leading computer-security experts to make sure its data remain untapped.

Is this year's census survey exceptionally burdensome or intrusive, as its critics suggest? No, the questions on the long form are almost all similar to those asked in previous census, including the 1990 census conducted when Bush's father was president. And every question on this year's long form was presented to members of Congress for their comments two years ago. To find fault with those queries at this late date is a cheap shot.

The information being gathered will be used to redraw political districts, calculate how government benefits like Medicare are to be shared equitably, and predict public needs such as mass transit, roads, libraries, schools, fire and police protection. Census figures from 1990 helped federal emergency officials determine quickly where shelters were most needed after Hurricane Andrew smashed south Florida in 1993.

The alternative, as urged by Bush, Lott & Co., would be to operate government uninformed of its people needs.

[From the Washington Post, Apr. 4, 2000]

DON'T TOY WITH THE CENSUS

(By David S. Broder)

Something about the census makes Republicans crazy. For the better part of two years, they battled the scientific community and the Clinton administration to prevent the use of statistical sampling techniques to correct for the undercount of people—mainly low-income, minority, immigrant, transient and homeless—that marred the 1990 census.

After reaching an impasse in Congress, the Republicans took the issue to court and had to be satisfied with a Supreme Court ruling that barred the use of sampling for apportionment of seats in the House of Representatives but approved it for everything else.

Then last week, just as the publicity effort to persuade people to return their census

forms was reaching its peak, several prominent Republicans said that Uncle Sam was getting too personal in some of the census questions and suggested that it would be okay for people to skip over those items they found offensive.

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott told Mississippi reporters that if he had received one of the long forms (delivered to one of every six households) he might have demurred at answering some of the questions. Texas Gov. George W. Bush, the GOP's presidential choice, said he hadn't opened his census form yet but wasn't sure if he would fill out the whole thing.

Later, both men retreated part-way from their positions (Bush after learning that he was in the short-form majority) and said people should return the forms with as much information as they could in good conscience provide. But Rep. J. C. Watts of Oklahoma, chairman of the House Republican Conference, blamed the bureaucracy for including questions that "have raised an unprecedented level of concern," and other Republicans said they would introduce legislation to make responding to the census voluntary, rather than requiring it by law.

All of this is basically nonsense—the kind of politicians' talk that gives hypocrisy a bad name even as it has serious policy consequences. Every single question on the census 2000 form was vetted with Congress two years ago, and every one has its origin and justification in a requirement included in a law passed by Congress.

In my files on census topics, I have a March 1998 report (that's two years ago, folks) titled "Questions Planned for Census 2000." That same report, I am informed, went to every member of Congress. In the back of that report is a table showing the first census in which each category of questions was asked. One of the questions on census 2000 to which some Republicans have objected asks for the family income. That has been asked in every census since 1940.

Another, the subject of much ridicule, asks, "Do you have complete plumbing facilities in this house, apartment or mobile home, that is, hot and cold piped water, a flush toilet, and a bathtub or shower?" That question, too, has been on the long form since 1940.

The plumbing question is asked, along with other measures of housing adequacy, as a way of targeting federal grants to the communities where the need for decent housing is greatest. Is there anyone who doubts that more help should go to South Central Los Angeles than to Beverly Hills?

The income question is used for a much wider variety of federal programs. In all, more than \$185 billion of federal grants to state and local governments is distributed on the basis of census information. One of the major concerns about the 1990 undercount—which later surveys suggested may have missed 8 million people while double-counting 4 million others—is that it deprived areas with large numbers of low-income people of the assistance they deserved.

A study released last month by the U.S. Census Monitoring Board and done by the accounting firm Price-waterhouseCoopers estimated that in 169 metropolitan areas where the poorly counted demographic groups are concentrated, the likely net loss of federal assistance may well reach \$11 billion in a decade.

Some of the estimated losses are enormous. The Los Angeles-Long Beach area, where hospitals, schools and other public facilities are chronically facing financial crisis, could be a \$1.8 billion loser. Miami has a \$300 million stake in an accurate count; New Orleans, \$97 million. And it is not just the big cities. Flagstaff, Ariz., is at risk for \$25

million—in effect, a 3.5 percent local tax or penalty for the undercount.

There's not a bit of evidence to justify the expressed concerns that the Census Bureau professionals will violate the privacy of individual families' responses. There is all too much proof that a flawed census hurts the most vulnerable Americans.

It is time the politicians stop messing around with the census.

[From the New York Times, Apr. 4, 2000]

PUBLIC INTERESTS; DOWN FOR THE COUNT

(By Gail Collins)

How many of you out there have strong reservations about the United States Census? May I see a show of hands?

I thought so. Everybody's cool. Once again, the radio talk-show circuit has plunged us into a violent debate about an issue that stirs the passions of average Americans slightly less than the cancellation of "Beverly Hills 90210."

You have no doubt received a census form, probably the short one that takes just a few minutes to fill out. The long form, which goes to about one-sixth of all American households, contains 53 questions, including whether your toilets flush and your relatives are all in their right minds. The answers are going to remain confidential for the next 72 years; at that point a Ph.D. candidate may grant you immortality by writing a dissertation on your indoor plumbing.

Census opponents appear to be mainly opponents of government, period. (James Bovard, the author of "Freedom in Chains," called the census "a scheme for generating grist for the expansion of the welfare state.") But they've created some nervous roiling in Congress. Senator Chuck Hagel of Nebraska is working on legislation to remove the \$100 penalty for failure to answer the questions, even though the fine hasn't been imposed in decades. He's being assisted by Senator Charles Robb of Virginia, a Democrat up for re-election who's determined to leave no group unpandered to.

The census is actually a noble public enterprise. It represents the founding fathers' breakthrough concept that people should have power not because of their property or titles, but simply because they're there. If we cannot expect election-fevered politicians to be reasonable about, say, Elian Gonzalez, it does seem they could muster up the grit to tell folks that they should regard filling out census forms like voting, and pretend to appreciate the opportunity.

But George W. Bush regards the issue as too hot for rationality. First he announced that "all of us need to encourage people to fill out the census," then instantly added that he could understand why some "don't want to give all that information to the government. And if I had the long form I'm not sure I'd want to, either."

A spokesman for Mr. Bush said the governor had received the short form, this year's equivalent of announcing you got a high draft number. An aid to the Senate majority leader, Trent Lott, said recently that Mr. Lott was telling people to just skip over any question they felt was intrusive. Now, the senator's constituents in Mississippi make out like bandits when it comes to federal aid, receiving an average of about \$2,000 per person more than they pay in federal taxes. On behalf of all the states that pay more than they get back, let me say: Go to it, Mississippians. Skip the long forms, and the short forms too. We'll give the money to some less conflicted state, perhaps one that hasn't just received a contract to build a monster aircraft carrier the Pentagon doesn't even want . . .

. . . We interrupt this harangue to report that Mr. Lott's office now says the senator

wants everybody to fill out the forms, and tells people to skip questions only if they threaten to toss their forms into the river unless their objections are met. When it comes to penalties for non-compliance, his spokesman added, "the senator is completely agnostic."

This possibly the first time in history that Mr. Lott's name has been used in the same sentence with the word "agnostic."

For every politician who's trying to distance himself from the census, there are four others desperately trying to get their constituents to fill out the forms, and raise their chances of getting more Federal aid. The governor of Georgia has gone on television with an ad urging his state to cooperate "or our Georgia money will be educating New York children for another 10 years."

Now, I'm a little wounded by that. Certainly we New Yorkers disagree with Georgians about some minor matters, such as the relative charms of John Rocker. But our elected officials—appalling as they may be—don't try to scare us into doing what they want by threatening to give our tax dollars to kids in Atlanta.

Go yell at the Mississippians for a while.

[From the San Francisco Examiner, Apr. 4, 2000]

WHAT REALLY COUNTS; POCKETS OF NON-COOPERATION WITH THE TAKING OF THE U.S. CENSUS DEMONSTRATE AN OVERREACTION TO FEARS OF INVASION OF PRIVACY

In an age of prosperity and sophistication, it's odd but understandable that people have doubts about so many things. On subjects ranging from the sanctity of confidential information to the good will of government institutions, we have become a nation of skeptics.

We may live in the global village, but command central is in some place far away, information is collected by unseen hands and essential decisions about our lives are made without consulting us.

These disconnects are reasons some people choose to rebel against seemingly innocuous practices such as the taking of the federal census every 10 years.

The U.S. Census carries out the useful objective of counting the noses of the country's populace and collecting information about their living conditions and habits. But because individuals have no control over the information once it leaves their hands, and because governments have not always guarded privacy, a minor rebellion has erupted.

Five of every six households get the short census form, which has only seven basic, unintrusive questions. It isn't causing problems. Every sixth household gets the long form, which has 53 questions—some of them more personal. It's the bone of contention.

Some people are refusing to return census forms, even though that is required by law. Some politicians haven't helped matters. Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush said he wasn't sure he would answer all the questions.

Good reasons exist to cooperate. A big enough boycott could affect how federal money, programs and services are divvied up. Census workers are redoubling their efforts to make sure that everyone is counted—which wasn't the case in 1990—so that every city and region gets its fair share of federal help.

The Census is a statistical snapshot of the United States. It tells a lot about who we are as a people and is a manifestation of *e pluribus unum* (out of many, one), the motto that appears on U.S. currency.

It's irresponsible for any politician, especially one who aspires to be president, to suggest breaking the law by refusing to fill

out census forms. And while skepticism toward government is healthy, if citizens weigh all factors, they should be inclined to cooperate with the census takers.

The cure for any potential breaches of confidentiality isn't refusal to answer. It's strict enforcement of privacy laws that prohibit the Census Bureau from sharing confidential information with anyone else, including other government agencies.

The time to demand changes in the census isn't in the midst of one. It's in Congress, in the form of legislation that updates questions, strengthens safeguards and perhaps increases penalties for violating citizens' privacy.

Census officials need to do a better job of explaining the agency's existing protections against leaks and other privacy abuses. Why are Census officials so faceless? It's easier to trust people you've met, or at least seen on television.

Skeptics are fond of asking to see the evidence. In the case of the census, we all know there's a potential for misuse. What true skeptics should be asking is, "Just where and when have any abuses occurred?"

Failing a convincing answer, the reasonable course for all of us—skeptics or not—is to put away any residual fears and allow ourselves to be counted. For the good of one and all.

[From the San Francisco Chronicle, Apr. 5, 2000]

DON'T SHRED THE CENSUS

ONE IN six American households are facing a question this week: is it really necessary to fill out a lengthy census form that borders on nosy and antiquated? The answer is a resounding yes.

The head count is especially contentious this time around. Along with the time required and the odd questions, there is a political overlay. Republican leaders, including likely GOP presidential nominee George W. Bush, suggest that folks toss the form if they feel it is too intrusive. This suggestion is irresponsible neglect of an important duty.

The census has made its share of mistakes. Some were mailed incorrectly. Its laundry list of 53 questions takes more than half an hour to fill out. For city and suburban residents, who make up the overwhelming majority of Americans, there are quaint questions about farm income and indoor plumbing. Why should citizens be bothered with these far-fetched queries?

There are other arguments. High-tech boosters are upset there are no questions about computer use, a topic that could use some exploring. But census bureaucrats said they were under pressure from single-issue groups ranging from pet lovers to religious leaders for special questions. The census ended up largely as a repeat of the last one, which will limit its potential.

But for better or worse, the census remains an essential task. It asks citizens to complete a picture of their country, not give away personal secrets. Income, ancestry, job history and even driving habits are useful ingredients in depicting America, circa April 2000.

More specifically, the census plays a role in doling out federal aid and congressional districts. It can be used by schools, public health and transit agencies in planning. Change can be measured.

This evolution of the country is exactly why San Francisco officials, civil rights organizations and school boards are pushing hard to get every household to fill out the paperwork. Opponents are wrong to depict a basic government service as an invasion of privacy.

[From the Los Angeles Times, Apr. 5, 2000]

IT'S THE LAW. COUNT ON IT

Senator Majority Leader TRENT LOTT (R-Miss.) and a few of his congressional colleagues seem to have forgotten the oath they swore to uphold the Constitution and the laws of the United States. Responding to constituent complaints about parts of the long-form census questionnaire, they have suggested that questions that some might consider objectionable can simply be ignored. That is plainly and simply, advice to break the law, and considering the source it's especially reprehensible.

About one household in six—approximately 20 million in all—was mailed the long census form; all others got a mere eight questions about the people in the household. The long form aims to gather information that is essential for directing certain federal outlays. In the current decade, expenditures linked directly to census-provided information could total close to \$2 trillion.

So there are a purpose and a policy consideration behind every census question, no matter how dubious its relevance may seem. Questions that some find intrusive and none of the government's business—about indoor plumbing or household income, for example—contribute to a national economic and demographic profile that is of great value to both government and the private sector. This information helps determine where roads and schools will be built, where Medicare and Medicaid funds should be channeled, where shopping centers are best located, where the needs of the disabled may be most acute. The Census Bureau would have done well to emphasize this point much earlier.

The census has steadily evolved beyond its limited 18th century purpose of congressional reapportionment. Those in Congress who now counsel leaving some census questions unanswered suffer from a convenient memory lapse: Every one of the questions, many of which are mandated by statute or court rulings, was approved by Congress two years ago.

[From the USA Today, Apr. 6, 2000]

200 YEARS PLUS: CENSUS NOSINESS ISN'T NEW

More than 200 years ago, Thomas Jefferson warned George Washington that taking the first U.S. Census, done in 1790, wouldn't be easy. A Census taker could wind up with a musket in the face. And those were the days of a well-regulated militia.

The Census today faces equal mistrust. This is due to the public's innate aversion to government prying, amplified by an unsubtle campaign to discredit the Census as too intrusive. Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., has told Americans they need not answer questions they find too invasive. So has Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush. Sen. Charles Hagel, R-Neb., wants to change the law to make answering most questions voluntary.

Whether the campaign to malign the long form will affect results won't be known for weeks. But Kenneth Prewitt, director of the Census Bureau, testified in Congress on Wednesday that the return rate is lagging well behind 1990 figures. The Census was aiming for a 61% return over all. Below that, Congress will have to allocate extra money for door-to-door head counting.

That's just one reason the anti-Census crowd is giving bad advice.

Among the others: It's illegal not to answer all of the questions. And self-defeating. Over 10 years, up to \$2 trillion in spending will be directed by Census findings. Lott's beloved Mississippi, with one of the lowest response rates and highest illiteracy rates, could be shortchanged on education dollars.

It also could lose private-sector investment that is guided in part by Census data.

Lastly, the Census isn't uncommonly intrusive. The sort form is the shortest since 1820. The long form, received by 1 in 6 households, is the shortest ever. And some of the most criticized questions—about employment, disability status, etc.—have been asked since the 19th century. The question about income, since 1940. Indeed, Americans give more personal information, more publicly, when they buy a house, pay their taxes or fill out a medical form.

Still, the Census raises predictable questions about nosiness. The long form wants to know about your job and your mortgage, subjects you might not comfortably share with your brother, much less Big Brother.

Plainly, the government has done a poor job of preventive promotion. Worries about privacy are historic, yet the long form's cover letter barely addresses them.

Most people still answer the forms with speed and candor. But expecting them every 10 years to remember why they are providing personal information without immediate gratification is asking for trouble.

The irony is that many critics today also helped defeat the use of statistical sampling to make the head count more accurate.

Their understood motive was to prevent a reapportionment of congressional districts to represent undercounted populations, which tend to vote Democrat. Opponents demanded an actual head count, which is less accurate. Now the motive is simply to align Republican leaders with the public's general distrust of federal data-gathering.

Finally, let's not forget that Congress had a chance to review all of the questions two years ago. If they had problems, that was the time to stand up and be counted. Today's debate: Census forms, but politics, privacy concerns needlessly stoke anger.

IF YOU WANT TO COUNT, BE COUNTED

(By Lynn Sweet, Washington Bureau)

Chicagoans have made a lousy initial response to the 2000 census, and the entire state of Illinois is lagging as well. This is a sort of collective passive-aggressive behavior for which there is no excuse. And don't start saying that census questions are intrusive.

The early trend shows that the mail-in responses from suburban Cook County and the collar counties are running as much as 20 points higher than the 40 percent from the city. This will only ensure, if the pace keeps up, that the suburbs will have more political muscle than they deserve in the state redistricting that follows each census.

And if Illinoisans don't let themselves be counted, the potential of losing a seat in the House of Representatives because of reapportionment will easier become a reality. The return of Federal funds to Illinois also is dictated largely by census-driven formulas.

Filling out the census form is a "marvelous opportunity" for Americans "to prove they can reverse the trend of civic disengagement," said Census Bureau director Kenneth Prewitt, a Downstate Alton native who is a former director of the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago.

Across the nation, people are mailing in census forms—short and long—in disappointing numbers, and Prewitt earlier this week sounded an alarm because the nationwide response rate was at 55 percent, below the 61 percent the bureau had expected by now.

It's not too late to get a mail-in census form by calling (800) 471-9424. And the numbers still can be vastly improved as the census moves on to the next phase, where census employees, called enumerators, start making house calls.

"Someone will be knocking on their door," said Prewitt, though it will make the counting operation needlessly more expensive. It costs about \$3 to process a mail-in form compared with \$35 for a household visit.

The cheap-shot comments of some Republicans—including Texas Gov. George W. Bush, the GOP presidential candidate, and Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.)—could, knowingly or not, hijack the census.

On the average, about one in six households gets a long census form that asks a total of 53 questions, compared with seven on the short questionnaire.

Lott and Bush suggested that individuals don't answer any census question they consider impertinent.

"If they are worried about the government intruding into their personal lives, they ought to think about it," Bush said. Lott was forced to backtrack after he realized that his home state, Mississippi, is near the bottom when it comes to mail-in response rates, 47 percent on Wednesday, compared with 56 percent for Illinois and 58 percent for Indiana. Ohio is the champ so far, with 62 percent.

Lott and the other complaining congressional Republicans—no Democrats so far—are whiners and intellectual phonies. They are objecting to questions that (1) were presented for review to Congress in 1997 and 1998 and (2) were on census forms that went out under Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush.

The census has asked about plumbing facilities for decades. There are bigger privacy issues looming right now, especially with the Internet, than being asked about flush toilets in your home.

And for those who don't like the questions about income and mortgages and the like, well, the government already has a lot of information from tax returns. The Census Bureau does not swap data with other agencies. Tax cheaters or people who keep things from spouses or partners may not like answering the questions. But there is no right to absolute privacy in the United States. If there were, height, weight and date of birth would not be on a driver's license.

Cooperating with the census means getting more from the government you already are paying for. It is selfish—and self-defeating—not to be counted.

[From the Daily Bruin, Apr. 7, 2000]
COMPLETING CENSUS FORM HAS FAR-
REACHING BENEFITS

Though some people are skeptical of the United States Census, completing these forms can lead to real benefits—including better schools and libraries, quality health care and up-to-date national demographic profiles.

Though the official due date passed nearly a week ago, residents can still be counted. The Census Bureau reports that only 55 percent of U.S. residents have returned their forms so far.

The slow response is caused, in part, by the popular sentiment that the census, especially the long version of the form, invades individuals' privacy. While worries about privacy are understandable, those who fear filling out the census should remember a consequence of their inaction: Neglecting to participate can lead to a significantly inaccurate count.

The short form poses generic questions like name, age, gender and race, while the longer form asks for more specific social and economic characteristics, such as individuals' occupations and housing types. Responses to these questions help determine how critical resources are distributed and which areas need those resources the most.

Specifically, demographic information is used to plan for services like schools, hospitals and roads. It may alert the government to focus its resources in areas reporting high rates of unemployment, or pinpoint regions that require better child care. State and federal governments also allocate funding to individual counties, cities and congressional districts for health care, schools and libraries; all of this information is based on the census results. The government's support is critical to the maintenance of these institutions, and so the number of people who report living in a given community is directly related to how much financing will be allocated to that particular community.

The number of inhabitants reported in each region also determines congressional apportionment. District lines are drawn with respect to census reports, and the number of members in the House of Representatives accorded to each state is also based on census information. If more underrepresented citizens completed their census forms, they might begin to claim deserved representation in Congress.

According to the Los Angeles Times, low responses to the 1990 Census deprived California of an estimated \$2 billion and four congressional seats over the last decade. Unless an increasing percentage of forms are returned, this discrepancy may only get worse.

Not only can the new census correct the omissions made by the 1990 version, but the revised questions provide previously unexplored, yet important, statistical data. The 2000 Census is unique because it allows individuals to claim mixed ethnic and racial backgrounds. Compiling this information will give the government a more accurate perspective on racial dynamics in our society and can only help in overcoming one of America's biggest social problems—racial conflict.

Worries about the long form's intrusiveness, however, are legitimate considering the detailed nature of some questions. Still, the census count is a vital responsibility that helps facilitate the functioning of a democratic government.

If you haven't completed the census, you can still do so. Internet census forms are available until April 15. In addition, census workers will be following up with non-respondents by telephone. Go to www.2000.census.gov for more information.

Take a few minutes to finish the questionnaire, obey the law and practice some civic responsibility. Make sure your voice is heard.

[From the Atlanta Journal, Apr. 8, 2000]
CONVERSATION STARTER: DON'T FALL PREY TO
PARANOIA ABOUT QUESTIONS
(By Harvey Lipman)

Fear is a natural human emotion. It keeps us safe in times of danger. Fear based on facts is caution, but baseless fear is just paranoia.

The fact is that the Census Bureau has never released any of the individual information that it gathers, not to the IRS, not to the FBI, not to the president, not to anybody. Never. That is a fact. The information gathered once every 10 years is compiled and the summary information, and only the summary information, is used to determine allocations essential to all of us, things like representation in Congress and federal funding of education.

The Census Bureau has proposed using statistical-sampling techniques as an alternate, less burdensome way, to obtain some of the data, but it has been rebuffed by Congress, the Supreme Court and even The Atlanta Journal. Until such time as these less invasive methods are permitted, there is

simply no other way to collect this necessary and constitutionally required information.

We have very few obligations as citizens of this country. If our participatory form of government is to work we must honor those obligations. Answering the census is such an obligation. As an American I am proud to do so, since I have no evidence whatsoever to fear that my government will divulge the personal information that I give them.

[From the Washington Post, Apr. 9, 2000]
ANSWER THIS QUESTION: HOW DID THE CENSUS
BECOME OUR WHIPPING BOY?

(By William Casey)

Ten years ago this month, I was wearing a Boston Red Sox batting helmet to work.

No, I wasn't playing in the shadow of Fenway Park's hallowed Green Monster of a wall or tending a BoSox souvenir concession. The helmet was just a tool I used during my short-lived career as an enumerator for the 1990 Census. It was my job to track down miscreants who—for one reason or another—had not returned their census forms in a timely fashion. The buildings I covered in downtown Minneapolis were overflowing with young people, so setting myself up at a table in the lobby—official headgear in place—seemed a good way to pull in the curious and disarm the suspicious. As residents trickled in from shift work or nights out, they invariably wandered over to see what was up. With a little pleasant persuasion, presto, the short form—even the long form!—was complete.

It worked. Back then, anyway.

Today, given the grumbling in some quarters about the intrusiveness of the 2000 Census, I might need more than a batting helmet to do that job. We have such unhappy customers as Mr. M. Smith, a gentleman from Virginia Beach who was so annoyed by the long form that "I threw mine in the trash where it belongs" and then made his civil disobedience public in a letter to Norfolk's *Virginian-Pilot*. (Dear Mr. Smith: Those questions have been standard on the census for many decades.)

Then there is Mr. P. Graham of Saline, Mich., who wrote a letter to the *Detroit News* accusing the Census Bureau of promoting "alienation" from government and asserting that most of the long form's 53 questions are "none of its business." (Dear Mr. Graham: Contrary to popular belief, the Census Bureau is asking those specific questions at the direction of Congress, which likes to use the census to collect information it has decided it needs.)

Add the comments from such Republican heavyweights as Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, Texas Gov. George W. Bush and Oklahoma Rep. Tom Coburn—all of whom have obligingly bashed the census for allegedly invading the nation's privacy—and you would think that the Census Bureau has suddenly transformed itself from an agency that once just counted noses into one that is just plain nosy.

This is—excuse my bluntness, please—a lot of nonsense. It's not the Census Bureau or its forms that have changed. It's us.

Or, more precisely, the fuss is one more dismaying result of the pervasive presence of consumerism and marketing in our lives. I find it puzzling, I admit, that people are bent out of shape by a form sent to them once a decade when—on a daily basis—they habitually reveal (willingly and unwillingly) the most private of data to advertisers, health insurers and Internet companies. Over the past 10 years, even the simplest sales transaction has become an opportunity to capture personal details that can be sold and resold (why do you think the cashier wants to know your phone number?). It's come to the point

where you can rarely sit down to dinner without receiving a "courtesy call" from someone who knows a lot more about you than just your area code. Those of us concerned about confidentiality might focus on the staggering amount of personal information maintained by largely invisible companies with names like Acxiom and Experian. Yet people think that they still have their "privacy" and that the government looms as the greatest threat to taking it away.

How did the census become the whipping boy, the embodiment of Big Brother, a waste of time, a symbol of oppression? The Census Bureau has an exemplary history of keeping the data it collects confidential, but that fact does not seem to have made a dent in the collective consciousness. It's easier to blame the census than to confront the world we've created.

Besides functioning as a worker bee on that 1990 census, I am a long-time user of census information. On both academic and journalistic projects, I've come to appreciate (and depend on) the richness and reliability of the material—which just about anyone can acquire, understand and put to work in a thousand ways. The notion of turning to particular census-driven data sets a few years from now and discovering that the 2000 information is unusable because of "citizen non-cooperation" is more than an annoyance. It makes my blood run cold.

A good deal of the complaining is directed toward the long form, a questionnaire sent to one of every six households in the past month. It's about the same length as the 1990 version and shorter than some previous censuses. There are changes—additions, deletions, rewordings—but it's basically the same old thing.

Continuity is a strong factor when it comes to census matters. It's not as if every 10 years, things start from ground zero. Just the opposite. The national statistical snapshots that census results help construct are most useful when they build on what went before.

It's true that census questionnaires are longer and more complex than they were in the first half of the 20th century—but that's hardly surprising. Those were times before the increased scope of governmental activity and responsibility that we take for granted today: an era when there was no Medicare, Medicaid or Social Security, no program of federal assistance to housing, minimal federal involvement with transportation spending and so forth.

There's a certain irony, however, in the fact that the census hasn't changed much last time around. Census 2000 mechanics could have been vastly different—more efficient, more accurate and much less expensive—but they're not. Carefully field-tested efforts to streamline the counting process via statistical sampling were opposed during the past few years for political reasons. It's common knowledge—although it's typically wrapped in layers of doublespeak—that Republicans see undercounting in urban areas as equating to a GOP advantage. (To be sure, if the sampling method threatened Democratic voting bases, then sides would no doubt be switched.) A count based on statistical sampling not only would have been less expensive, it would have helped prevent the higher levels of background noise we're experiencing at the moment.

There have always been ample numbers of people who balk at completing their questionnaires. In 1990, my fellow enumerators and I had to deal with people who—like our friends Mr. SMITH and Mr. GRAHAM above—were not inclined to cooperate. Mostly they were reluctant; occasionally they were almost hostile. But the majority of them completed their forms when asked to do so di-

rectly. Sometimes a chance to sound off about their objections was required. I was happy to oblige. "Whatever it takes" was my motto—at least during those six weeks.

This year's census has become a snapshot in a way that I didn't expect: It reflects not just how we live, but how we feel about ourselves and our society.

Take, for example, the subject of race. If, as a society, we are stalemated on issues of race, then how can we expect a census form to solve them, or even make them clearer? After reading through the seemingly endless and convoluted choices that the census short form offers ("If person 1 considers his/her race to include two or more races . . ."), is it any surprise that the precooked racial and ethnic categories seem unsatisfactory? I've heard more than a few people say they wrote in "human"—which seems, in fact, like a very human reaction to the country's current fascination and obsession with race and ethnicity.

Because the census at its core serves a political purpose—determining the number of representatives from each state—the count has always had a political dimension. But I don't recall the census forms being a hot item in the presidential election years of 1960 and 1980. This year, it appears, any issue properly framed and spun is fodder for "principled" stands by presidential candidates. One day it could be AL GORE'S sudden, self-serving switch on the Elian Gonzalez case; the next, it could be George W. Bush, aiding and abetting census resisters. "I can understand," the GOP nominee-to-be said, "why people don't want to give over that information to the government. If I had the long form, I'm not so sure I would do it, either."

Not to be outdone, Nebraska's rising star of a senator, Republican CHUCK HAGEL, offered to introduce legislation that would make question-answering optional. (Memo to the esteemed Mr. HAGEL: The Census 2000 questions were sent to Congress for review in 1998. No squawk was raised then.) With this kind of "leadership" out there—explicitly undermining a program that requires individual citizens to pull together in the interest of the larger whole—no wonder skepticism about the process is rising.

After litigation over the Census Bureau's proposed use of statistical sampling went to the Supreme Court—and sampling was ruled out for apportionment purposes, although its use for redistricting within states remains an open question—one might have hoped that by the time April 1, 2000, rolled around, we would have gotten our act together as a nation and proceeded with the job. I cannot help but wonder if the census is falling victim to our new millennium's variety of cultural solipsism. Societal building blocks such as family, neighborhood and community are subjected today to a wide range of pressures—largely destructive. These institutions were, to a substantial extent, the basis for successful past censuses. But the principle of doing something for the common good—for society's good—doesn't stand a chance if society's leaders won't speak up for it.

On Thursday, I read that hopes are "dimming for a timely and accurate count" in Census 2000. If response rates remain underwhelming, that will necessitate time-consuming and expensive enumerator work to track down, cajole, persuade and gather information from those who have not yet submitted it. Remember, "whatever it takes."

But later on, after things have settled down, perhaps a lesson regarding the fragility of our social and political fabric will have been learned. It's often said, but still true: It's easier to tear things down than it is to build them up.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about an issue of great importance in the year 2000.

I wish to express thanks to all Americans who are participating in the Census 2000. You are making an enormous difference to your community and setting our nation on the best path for the new century.

As of last night, 60% of Americans have completed and sent in their census forms. Nevertheless, we have much work to do, Mr. Speaker. We need to reach to the 40% of Americans who have yet to complete their census forms.

Regrettably in previous weeks, when everyone has been working to improve the initial response rate, we had Members of Congress, including prominent leaders of the Republican party, people who should better, tell the American public that the census was optional.

Unfortunately, the reality remains that the Census Bureau has missed millions of persons in conducting each decennial census, especially minorities, the poor, children, newly arrived immigrants, and the homeless. We cannot allow this to happen again.

For these reasons, of course, it should come as no surprise that I am disappointed by recent comments by highly respected individuals that advise Americans not to perform their civic duty. As reported in numerous news stories, some lawmakers on the other side urged citizens not to answer questions regarding the long form.

Yet over two years, every Member of Congress received a detailed list of the questions to be asked on the long form, including a description of the need for asking it and specific legal requirements supporting it. The time for input on the question was then. The time to achieve an accurate census count is now.

The low percentage of census forms being returned in certain cities with high minority populations is alarming. We must do all we can to change response rates. These remarks only discourage faster response rates.

Even the Governor of the State of Texas has said he supports his party's position against the use of modern statistical methods—methods that would get a more accurate count of America's African Americans, Hispanic, Asian American, and American Indian populations.

As a member of the Congressional Caucus Task Force on Census, I am obliged to convey my concern that no one is left out of the Census process. Unlike in the 1990 Census where so many minorities were disproportionately missed or "undercounted" as we say, everyone must be counted in the Census 2000.

Our goal for Census 2000 must be the most accurate census possible. We all know that accurate census data has proven vital to people of color, both economically and politically.

Texas lost almost \$1 billion due to the 1990 undercount. Over 486,000 Texans were missed in the 1990 Census, which prevented Texas from securing critically-needed federal funding for health care, transportation, housing, and community development.

In the city of Houston, 67,000 people were undercounted in 1990.

A comprehensive analysis of federal funding was prepared by PriceWaterhouseCoopers. The analysis was one at the request of the Presidential members of the U.S. Census Monitoring Board. According to

PriceWaterhouseCoopers, the population "undercount" similar to that which occurred in the 1990 Census would cost 26 states a minimum of \$9.1 billion. States with the largest numerical undercounts would be hit the hardest. California would lose more than \$5 billion, Texas nearly \$2 billion, and Florida \$5 million. I am particularly concerned that 120,267 are estimated to be undercounted from Census 2000 in Harris County, Texas.

Moreover, \$185 billion in federal funds are allocated each year based on each state's respective share of the population, as determined every 10 years by the Census. The PriceWaterhouseCoopers study examined the 15 programs analyzed by the General Accounting Office in its 1999 report on the funding impact of the 1990 census undercount.

The eight programs most affected by the census are Medicaid, Foster Care, Rehabilitation Services Block Grants, Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grants Adoption Assistance, Child Care and Development Block Grants, and Vocational Education Block Grants.

Our communities cannot afford to squander the opportunity to secure desperately needed resources to make these programs available to everyone. An accurate Census is the only way to assure that local communities receive their 'fair share' of federal spending; an inaccurate count will shortchange the affected communities for an entire decade.

Keeping response rates high must remain a primary purpose in obtaining an accurate census. Recent news stories have only highlighted this need. Texas has a 33 percent return, but the fourth largest city in the nation only has 26 percent return. That is the city of Houston. This is precisely what we must change. Only a high response rate to the Census 2000 questionnaires will enable our community to secure desperately needed funds.

And while some have recently raised concerns about the legality or constitutionality of the long form, those only serve as a distraction. In fact, the Census Bureau has not prosecuted anyone for not sending in their Census form since the 1960s. They are interested in getting complete and reliable data; they do not want to jeopardize the public trust.

The long form is a sound investment—for a relatively small additional cost, information of very high quality about a number of subjects is collected for many geographic areas. The return on this investment is concrete information that serves the basis for sound public policy decisions and that supports the accurate allocation of over billions of dollars.

Community leaders use the long form for planning a wide range of activities, including neighborhood revitalization, economic development and improved facilities and services.

We need the long form to build highways, roads, bridges and tunnels in areas that need them. And planners need information about where people live and work and the times they leave for work.

Each long form question provides valuable, indeed essential, information for important public policy and business decisions.

For example, data from the question on the number of telephones in the home area is used to help plan local 911 emergency services. They also are used to help implement the Older Americans Act to provide emergency and health-care services to homebound seniors without phone service.

Data from the question on how long it takes to commute to work is used by federal, state, local and private transportation planners to help design new roads, bus routes, and mass transit transportation and to manage traffic congestion, as well as to distribute federal transportation dollars.

Indeed, data from the question on the veteran's status are used to plan the location of veteran's hospitals and to efficiently deliver veterans health-care and nursing services.

Your answers to Census 2000 are absolutely critical to ensure that every possible dollar is made available to the poor, the sick, and the neglected in our communities.

The U.S. Census only comes around once every ten years, but its information is used throughout the decade. Together, let's make sure that everyone is heard.

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TAX LIMITATION CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity tonight to discuss a very important issue that is going to be on the floor of the House of Representatives this week. It is called the tax limitation amendment. The tax limitation amendment, known as H.J. Res. 37, is a very, very simple amendment that was first brought to life some 10 years ago by the gentleman from the 6th District of Texas (Mr. BARTON).

Last week we had a press conference where we talked about, in essence, the passing of the mantle from the gentleman from Texas to myself, being the lead for the tax limitation amendment where we will bring to the floor of the House of Representatives on Wednesday an opportunity for all Members not only to fully debate but also to vote on something which I believe is very, very important.

The essence of H.J. Res. 37 is that we are going to make it more difficult for Washington to raise taxes on America. That is what this debate is all about. It will be about doing those things that Washington talks about, making it more difficult by requiring a supermajority, a two-thirds vote on the floor of the House of Representatives and in the Senate to raise taxes. Part of what we are talking about today, we would assume, is just a conservative idea, and I think that that would be correct. But it is a bipartisan idea. It is an idea not only that has grassroots all across America, people who are pro-business but it also has people who consider themselves Democrats, Democrats even, who understand that raising taxes should not be easy, because taxes come from people who get up and go to work every day, work diligently, honest people, taxpayers, and then are giving too much money to Washington, D.C.

One of the persons who is the co-chairman of this effort, a coleader in

this effort, is the gentleman from the 4th District of Texas (Mr. HALL). This evening I am very honored to have the gentleman from Texas with me to help not only the discussion about the tax limitation amendment but also for an opportunity for us to discuss this.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from the 4th District of Texas, a life-long Democrat, a conservative, and a man who understands it is important to make it more difficult to raise taxes on taxpayers.

Mr. HALL of Texas. I thank the gentleman from Texas for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I am here today, of course, to express my support for the tax limitation amendment. I have been for this amendment from the word go. I really do not understand that it ought to be a Republican or a Democratic thrust or a liberal or conservative thrust because I think it is an American thrust. Requiring a two-thirds vote to raise taxes would force very serious consideration on this legislation at any time that they would attempt to raise taxes; and it would require, as the gentleman from Texas has said, a supermajority vote on any proposal that would impact the pocket-books of every hard-working American.

The major test of this legislation would be not what class supports it. We are in for at least 5 wonderful years in this country. We now have, rather than the deficits of the 1980s and the 1990s, a surplus; and we are going to have good times for the next 5, maybe for the next 10, years to have money to be that that we ought to be for people who have no lobby, pay a lot of it on our debt. That is tantamount to a tax break for everyone.

I think that if we would go into our district, and I say "our district" because the gentleman and I share districts in Texas. I have part of Dallas County in my district. He has a much larger part of it. I have most of Kaufman. He has a part of Kaufman in his district. He has a part of Smith County which is Tyler; Tyler, Texas. We represent the same type of people, people who want less government, people who want to keep the money that they work for, people who want to plan ahead, people who want to have money in September to buy school clothes without having the taxes that are put on them, that have been historically put on them by a 50 percent vote. A lot of those votes like the Tax Reform Act of 1986 would never have happened if it had taken a two-thirds vote.

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So I think if they would go out into their district, into any part of our district, and talk to the first 10 people they see and ask them would you like to see it a little bit more difficult for the Congress of the United States to take money out of your left hip pocket, what do you think their answer would be?

Mr. SESSIONS. Let me say this: the gentleman from Texas, whose district