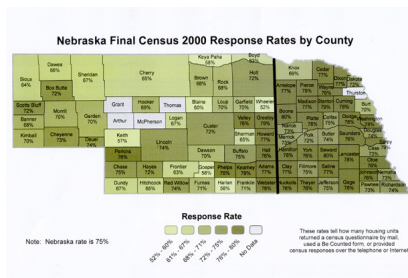


More people counted means more money

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

Friday, 05 February 2010 14:41 - Last Updated Friday, 05 February 2010 14:44



Census office manager urges residents to participate in census.

Money and power leave the state when people don't stand up to be counted.

That's why it's important Nebraska citizens answer the 10-question form to be distributed in March, said Victor Gentry, manager for the Census office in North Platte.

"It's all about our power and our money because we send billions of dollars to Washington D.C. from Nebraska when not every person is counted," Gentry explained.

In fact, he said the information the Census collects helps to determine how more than \$400 billion dollars of federal funding is spent yearly on infrastructure and services like:

- Hospitals
- Job training centers
- Schools
- Senior centers
- Bridges, tunnels and other-public works projects
- Emergency services

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Each person who isn't counted means \$1,114 fewer federal dollars, he said.

The Census form—which includes only questions about how many people live in a household, their race and gender—can now only be answered on an official document that will be delivered to each household.

However government officials are still experimenting with an Internet form that won't be available this year, according to the Web site at 2010.census.gov.

Gentry stressed that undocumented workers should not fear the questionnaire because social security numbers and other information are not included.

To help count everyone, he said the Census form is available in 23 languages in Nebraska.

Forms will be hand delivered with about 28 question-assistance centers located across the state in such places like libraries.

“Trained people will be there to help people fill them out,” Gentry said.

Additionally, he said census officials are working hard to hire people who live and work in an area and who speak different languages.

Respondents need not worry about Census information being made public, he said, since it can't be released for 72 years.

“It's used for government statistical work,” Gentry said, noting that Census information from

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1930 has just been released.

Within the 52 most western counties his office oversees—from roughly Grand Island to the Wyoming border, Gentry said 150,000 households will receive Census forms beginning March 1.

Outside of Scottsbluff, Lincoln, Buffalo, Hall and Adams counties, all forms will be hand delivered.

Citizens are asked to mail back the forms to the U.S. Census Bureau by April 1.

Census workers will re-visit each household that didn't return a form and fill out forms based on what respondents answer.

"It's hard to do because workers visit weekends and evenings when people are home," Gentry said.

During the 2000 Census, 70% of residents living in Dawson County returned forms.

Gentry said they want to raise that percentage above 75% in 2010 in the county and state.

Ten years ago, Nebraska had an overall return rate of 75% which was second highest in the nation to Iowa with 76%.

Census workers will continue to be hired through March.

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Gentry said 5,000 people in his area will be tested before they are hired.

The Bible refers to a census so Rome could collect taxes from citizens.

However it wasn't until 1790 when the first census took place in the United States to determine the number of seats each state would have in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Officials say the method was also created to gain a better understanding of where people lived and to establish patterns of settlement as the nation grew.

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