

## South Florida Sun-Sentinel.com

### With federal aid at stake, Florida census workers to seek the uprooted

By Georgia East

South Florida Sun-Sentinel

February 19, 2009

How do you find people on the move?

In South Florida, where a record number of foreclosures have pushed thousands out of their homes, the U.S. Census Bureau faces the challenge of finding, and counting, more transient families next year.

On April 1, 2010, every household will be asked to fill out forms for the decennial census.

"Our job is to count every person," said census senior specialist Pam Page Bellis. "We count at homeless shelters, we go to soup kitchens. We are working with agencies to identify people who don't live in traditional residences."

The stakes are high. The census is used to determine how much federal aid a community receives for education and highways, among other things, and the number of U.S. House representatives each state sends to Washington.

Starting in April, the agency will deploy hundreds of people in South Florida to verify addresses.

The census also plans to hire as many as 2,000 employees in Broward and Palm Beach County to assist with outreach and other tasks.

Details of how they plan to get the word out is being unveiled at census open houses. One is scheduled from 5 to 7 p.m. today at 400 N. Congress Ave. in West Palm Beach. One was held in Fort Lauderdale on Wednesday.

The 2000 census overlooked about 196,000 Floridians, most of them minorities, poor people, children and immigrants. A report by the U.S. Census Monitoring Board in 2001 said the undercount could cost the state \$91.6 million in federal aid over 11 years.

"If I were in a place where sub-prime mortgages have caused a lot of people to move out of a locality, I'd be concerned," said Phil Sparks, co-director of The Census Project, a not-for-profit organization made up of civil rights groups, census data users and private companies. "For the next 10 years, it could mean less federal aid for the very programs people there need."

Broward County had the nation's sixth-highest annual foreclosure rate in 2008.

"The consequence of what the world looks like in April 2010 will last 10 years," said demographer Dick Ogburn, with the South Florida Regional Planning Council.



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# The Washington Post

## Supreme Court Restricts Voting Rights Act's Scope

N.C. Redistricting Plan Favoring Minority Group Is Tossed

By Robert Barnes  
Washington Post Staff Writer  
Tuesday, March 10, 2009

A fractured Supreme Court yesterday narrowed the protections of the Voting Rights Act, saying it does not require governments to draw electoral districts favorable to minority candidates in places where minorities make up less than half the population.

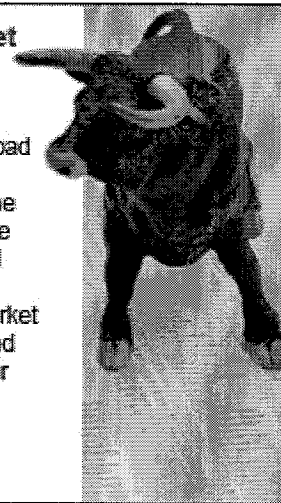
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By a 5 to 4 vote, the court said race must be considered only in drawing boundaries where a "geographically compact group of minority voters" make up at least 50 percent of a single-member district.

The decision will limit the legal options for minorities challenging redistricting efforts that they believe dilute their voting rights after the 2010 Census. The court said Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act cannot be read as requiring "crossover districts," where minority voters are grouped in such significant numbers that they can elect a representative of their choice with only a modicum of support from majority voters.

The splintered opinion showed how divided the court remains in considering the issue of race and political representation, and how uneasy it is about the role the judiciary must play.

"There is an underlying principle of fundamental importance: We must be most cautious before interpreting a statute to require courts to make inquiries based on racial classifications and race-based predictions," wrote Justice Anthony M. Kennedy in the plurality opinion.

He was joined by Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. and Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr. Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas agreed with the outcome but not with the reasoning behind Kennedy's decision.

The opinion confirmed Kennedy's likely pivotal role when the court next month considers a constitutional challenge to Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, which requires all or parts of 16 states with a history of racial discrimination to get federal approval before enacting any change to their voting laws.

Several election law experts said yesterday's decision showed that although Kennedy might not be ready to reject the act as unconstitutional, he is open, in the words of Richard L. Hasen, a professor at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles, to interpreting the act "in ever stingier ways."

Those challenging the constitutionality of the statute say it has outlived the purpose it served when first enacted in 1965 and is out of step with an America "that has elected Barack Obama as its first African-American president," according to the petition filed by a Texas utility district that is the plaintiff in the

case next month.

But Kennedy gave some hope to the other side with language in the opinion that appeared to recognize the importance of the voting rights legislation.

"Racial discrimination and racially polarized voting are not ancient history," Kennedy wrote. "Much remains to be done to ensure that citizens of all races have equal opportunity to share and participate in our democratic processes and traditions."

The case before the court, *Bartlett v. Strickland*, concerned a decision by the North Carolina legislature to enhance minority representation by creating a district that was 39 percent minority. It has consistently elected a black representative. But to create the favorable environment, lawmakers violated a provision of the state constitution that said district boundaries could not cross county lines.

The state Supreme Court struck down the district, rejecting lawmakers' argument that the district was required to comply with the Voting Rights Act.

Kennedy said that the state court got it right and that only districts where minorities made up more than 50 percent are protected.

The majority-minority rule "draws clear lines for courts and legislatures alike," Kennedy wrote. At the same time, he wrote, the decision should not be interpreted to "entrench" majority-minority districts.

His opinion expressed the same ambivalence toward crossover districts. He acknowledged that they fostered the cooperation between races the act was intended to achieve but said the court should not "require, by force of law, the voluntary cooperation our society has achieved."

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Justice David H. Souter, writing for the liberal dissenters, said that the crossover districts best fulfill the goals of the Voting Rights Act and that the plurality's decision will "force the states to perpetuate racially concentrated districts, the quintessential manifestations of race consciousness in American politics."

He noted that as a practical matter, crossover districts are working. Of nine North Carolina House districts where blacks make up more than 50 percent of the voting-age population, all but two elected a black representative in 2004. In 12 additional districts where blacks make up at least 39 percent of voters, all but one elected a black.

Taken together, Souter said, that meant blacks, who make up about 20 percent of the state's voting-age population, have an opportunity to elect a representative of their choice in about 17.5 percent of the state's legislative districts, "a proportional electoral opportunity."

The case prompted five of the nine justices to explain their views.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg wrote separately that the decision "returns the ball to Congress' court" and said lawmakers could "clarify beyond debate" their intentions.

Thomas and Scalia said the act does not authorize any claim by minority voters that their influence is diluted, no matter the size of the minority population. They said the court's decisions that try to interpret the nonspecific language of Section 2 have produced "a disastrous misadventure in judicial policymaking."



9/25/09



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## BROWARD Politics



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Next entry: Wanna hear some of the ideas from Lauderdale's employee suggestion box?

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### Lighthouse Point to Census: Don't leave any of us out!

> Posted by Brittany Wallman on September 25, 2009 11:38 AM

**Staff Writer Linda Trischitta reports:**

Hey city managers, what could you do with \$400,000 a year, dispensed over a decade?

That's how much federal money that Lighthouse Point Mayor Fred Schorr says the city missed out on when 32 percent of households weren't counted in the 2000 Census.

Like other cities around Broward, Lighthouse Point is holding a get-out-the-count kickoff. Theirs will be run by City Clerk Carol Landau on Oct. 27, 10 a.m. at City Hall. Schorr wants to ease residents' fears that their privacy will be invaded by Census takers.

"The Census information is sealed for 72 years," Schorr said. "It is not used for immigration or homestead. It's just 10 questions. We want the snowbirds counted too. It's about where they are on that day, not where their driver's license or homestead is."

The city expects Census volunteers will hit their streets March 15.

POSTED IN: City-Town-Village Government (261)

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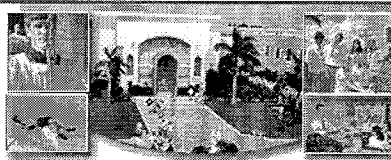
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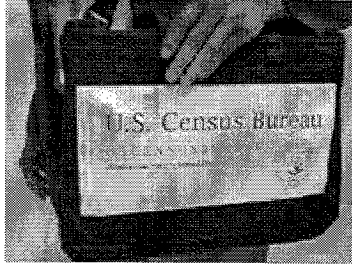
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10/24/09

## Miami Challenges 2008 Census Numbers

MIAMI (CBS4) —



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Miami Mayor Manny Diaz's commission has believed the U.S. Census Bureau underestimated Miami's population and income levels. Diaz's administration theorized that this would hurt the potential for businesses from opening up in the city, according to CBS4 news partner the Miami Herald. Diaz commissioned a study to figure out the gap and came up with the number, 65,000.

According to the Herald, the study said 65 thousand people are missing from the 2008 Census population estimate. Factor in the number of people who are allegedly missing, and the city's population would have been 480 thousand.

Social Compact carried out the study for the city of Miami. The city has filed an official challenge of the 2008 population estimate with the Census bureau. Miami filed a similar challenge in 2008 and the Census bureau upped the population to 424 thousand.

Census population figures determine distribution of billions of dollars in federal funding and congressional delegation size. A big population miscount would substantially shortchange the city. The U.S. Conference of Mayors puts that loss at \$2,200 per person, according to the Herald.

10/24/09

Kelly, Alex

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**From:** West, Bob  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 27, 2009 8:22 AM  
**To:** Kelly, Alex  
**Cc:** Bahl, Mathew  
**Subject:** FYI Miami: Census estimate short by 65000 people

## The Miami Herald

Posted on Sat, Oct. 24, 2009

### Miami: Census estimate short by 65,000 people

BY ANDRES VIGLUCCI  
[aviglucci@MiamiHerald.com](mailto:aviglucci@MiamiHerald.com)

Convinced the U.S. Census Bureau has long underestimated Miami's population and income levels -- discouraging retailers, banks and supermarkets from opening shop in the city -- Mayor Manny Diaz's administration commissioned an in-depth study that confirms the existence of a substantial gap.

How large? Try 65,000 people missing from the 2008 Census population estimates, a sum that would bring the city population to a record 480,000. In addition, the study said traditional Census-based market estimates missed a whopping \$1.3 billion in residents' income.

Armed with the study, to be formally released Monday and conducted by respected nonprofit research group Social Compact, the city has filed an official challenge of the 2008 population estimate with the Census Bureau. City officials also hope to use the study to persuade retailers, supermarket operators and banks to open stores and branches and invest in city neighborhoods, in particular commercially underserved areas such as Liberty City and Allapattah.

Because the term-limited Diaz leaves office next month, though, that job would fall to his successor. Social Compact, whose research has been partially underwritten by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, will continue working with the city for another year.

"It would behoove whoever follows the mayor to immerse themselves in this," said Diaz's chief of staff, Javier Fernandez. "It has myriad uses."

The study's neighborhood-by-neighborhood assessments show tens of millions of dollars in spending power that goes unrecognized by retailers, ranging from nearly \$50 million annually along the Coral Way corridor to \$18 million in Overtown. Analysis of buying patterns show residents of those areas are spending that much on basic retail needs in other neighborhoods or outside the city because they lack nearby shops and grocery stores.

Social Compact's analysis found total annual income in the city to be \$9.1 billion, compared with \$7.8 billion derived by traditional market estimates.

"We're trying to find the missing market opportunities," said Social Compact President John

Talmage. ``It's a substantial amount of money."

Part of the explanation for the income undercount, according to the study: About 9 percent of city residents' annual earnings comes from the informal -- or cash -- economy. That means money earned in tips, baby-sitting, housekeeping or other work that is not reported to the government and not picked up on by traditional market studies, Talmage said.

Cash transactions are widespread in some neighborhoods in part because there are no accessible bank branches, Talmage said. In Liberty City, for instance, the study found that 83 percent of residents pay all their bills in cash.

Social Compact's findings could make a critical difference because developers, retailers and banks use population and purchasing power in calculating where to invest. Social Compact's numbers are derived from a ``drill-down" methodology that combines dozens of wide-ranging data sources, including surveys, utility records, building permits and property records.

Because Census population figures also determine distribution of billions of dollars in federal funding, a big population miscount would also substantially shortchange the city. The U.S. Conference of Mayors puts that loss at \$2,200 per person.

The Census issues annual population and income estimates based on surveys to update the decennial Census count. But the bureau acknowledges undercounts in hard-to-reach groups such as immigrants and racial and ethnic minorities. The bureau, in addition, has not taken into account thousands of new residents brought into the city by the development boom, Miami officials say. Talmage says that's because the bureau has trouble keeping abreast of households created by new construction.

The city's Census challenge is its second in a row. Last year, the Census Bureau upped Miami's 2007 population estimate to 424,000 after a challenge by the city. On Friday, Census Bureau officials told the city they believe the methodology in its newest challenge is sound, but they're still analyzing the population numbers.

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## Census prepares IT for 2010

Disasters, disease could complicate the count

- By William Jackson
- Oct 26, 2009

Preparations for the 2010 census have been complicated by the economic challenges and natural disasters since the last census, and the final count could be further complicated by the H1N1 flu epidemic. But the use of handheld computers, Global Positioning System data and a geographic information system mapping method have aided the development of the Master Address File of more than 140 million addresses that will underpin the decennial count.



The Census Bureau has redesigned databases in its Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing System (TIGER), Census Director Robert M. Groves told the House Oversight and Government Reform's Information Policy, Census, and National Archives Subcommittee last week.

"Prior to the redesign, MAF and TIGER data were stored in county-level files," Groves said at the hearing held Oct. 21. "Now that the data are kept nationally, we can more easily match and update across counties."

The bureau also has improved the accuracy of its data with additional spatial data. "This, along with the collection of GPS coordinates in address canvassing, will result in a more accurate representation of the location of addresses," Groves said.

But although the job of finalizing and verifying address lists is well under way and the Census Bureau is in the process of opening an additional 344 local offices in preparation for the final count next year, some key testing remains to be done on the IT systems that will support the count, the Government Accountability Office found.

"If the bureau's address list and maps are inaccurate, people can be missed, counted more than once, or included in the wrong location," said Robert Goldenkoff, GAO director of strategic issues. The census figures are used for, among other things, apportioning more than \$400 billion in federal tax dollars to state and local communities. "Given the importance of MAF/TIGER to an accurate census, it is critical that the bureau ensure this system is thoroughly tested."

Given the growing size and complexity of the census, electronic information systems are likely to become more critical in the gathering and handling of the data.

"Rigorous planning and perhaps even a fundamental re-examination of the census might be required because the current approach to the national enumeration may no longer be financially sustainable," Goldenkoff said. "Indeed, the cost of conducting the census has, on average, doubled each decade since 1970 in constant 2010 dollars. If that rate of cost escalation continues into 2020, the nation could be looking at a \$30 billion census."

Challenges faced in the current census include the recent wave of mortgage foreclosures on residential property that has displaced many people, as well as disasters such as hurricanes that have struck the Gulf Coast. Hurricane Katrina alone left an estimated 300,000 homes destroyed or uninhabitable, forcing residents to move permanently or relocate into temporary housing.

The Census Bureau has responded with the use of technology such as handheld computers for its canvassers, who are charged with visiting every residential address to verify accuracy. The computers were used not only to record and transmit address data but also to receive and apply GPS data to the addresses.

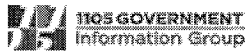
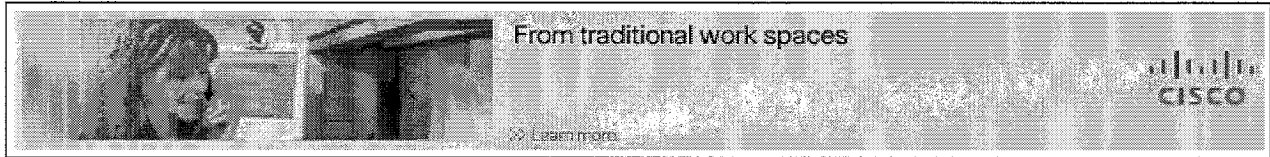
The GAO added the 2010 census to its list of high-risk programs in 2008 because of questions about the reliability of the handheld computers and inadequate management of the IT systems. But the bureau has made progress in getting the programs back on track. The canvass was completed between March and July of this year, and early problems with GPS systems were quickly resolved and the bureau monitored handheld performance.

But testing of the mapping system that will provide final data for the enumeration has lagged, GAO said. Plans for only five of eight system tests for the MAF and TIGER system have been finalized, and only three tests have been completed.

"Given the importance of MAF/TIGER to establishing where to count U.S. residents, it is critical that the bureau ensure this system is thoroughly tested," Goldenkoff said. "Bureau officials have repeatedly stated that the limited amount of time remaining will make completing all testing activities challenging."

#### About the Author

William Jackson is a senior writer for GCN and the author of the [CyberEye](#) column.



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January 04, 2010

Counties hope for successful 2010 Census

By RON HURTIBISE  
Staff Writer

You'll be hearing a lot about the 2010 Census in a few weeks.

On TV. In the newspaper. On billboards. On fliers. On the sides of Votran buses. And most importantly, in your mailbox this March.

That's when every household in the country will receive a 10-question survey with an April 1 deadline to fill out and send back.

A decade ago, just 67 percent of households mailed back their census questionnaires. That low compliance rate increased the number of follow-up mailers and census workers later sent to nonrespondents' homes. It also might have caused an undercount of residents that cost the area federal dollars for roads, schools and other needs, says Volusia County Councilwoman Joie Alexander.

Alexander chairs the county's Complete Count Committee, which is organizing a media and public relations blitz to urge people to fill out and return their questionnaires by the deadline.

Hoping for a 75 percent compliance rate this time around, the committee is working to overcome some residents' reluctance to provide personal information by stressing the importance of obtaining the most accurate count possible, Alexander said.

Although respondents are required to provide names, genders and ages of all household members, the agency is forbidden by law from disclosing that information to any other party, including government agencies such as the CIA, FBI or IRS, Alexander pointed out. According to the Census Bureau's Web site, violators are subject to fines of up to \$250,000 or five years in prison.

The 2000 census counted 443,343 people in Volusia County. A 2008 census survey estimated the population at 498,036, but this year's census will mark the first direct count in a decade.

The census is used to determine how the House of Representatives' 435 members are distributed among states. The states with the largest populations get more representatives, and that means more power and money when Congress splits up its huge pool of federal dollars each year.

Distribution of much of that money is based on population, and that's why it's important to count as many residents as possible, Alexander says. "The thing the census does is provide a number that's plugged into the federal (funding) formula and used as money is divvied up for the next 10 years," she said.

While the awareness campaign is aimed at everyone, committee members are making special efforts to reach college students, faith-based communities, public-school children, and Spanish speakers in West Volusia, she said.

The County Council in April budgeted \$75,000 for the campaign.

Flagler County, where 70 percent of households mailed back their questionnaires in 2000, is spending \$7,900 to promote this year's count, spokesman Carl Laundrie said. With current population estimates at 95,000, Flagler officials believe the census will turn up at least 5,000 more residents, putting its official population above 100,000 for the first time.

That would move the county into a different category when federal funding decisions are made, he said.

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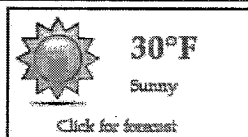
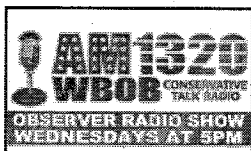
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Monday, January 04, 2010

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SNAP LINKADS

## Census Takers Start Their Count in March

By: News Service of Florida - Jan 1st, 2010

What's your race? What type of home do you live in? And how many people live in that home?

All easy questions, and the basis for some of the biggest decisions made by government officials. The coming year brings the Census, which has implications from shaping how nearly \$400 billion in federal funding is spent to how many members of Congress each state has.

It is also a contentious process because historically many groups have not been counted, particularly migrant workers, children and university students. In Florida, lawmakers have held some meetings already to deal with potential impacts of the census, but so far, without any action.

Earlier this year, state Rep. Perry Thurston, D-Plantation, wrote House Speaker Larry Cretul urging him to support legislation that would put \$10 million toward identifying the state's hard-to-count residents in the 2010 census.

"It is crucial that these individuals be counted," Thurston wrote.

The count also determines how much Florida will collect from Washington for hospitals, job training centers, schools, senior centers, public works projects and emergency services.

One of the biggest decisions that hinge on the census is how many representatives Florida will get in the U.S. Congress. Every 10 years, the number of representatives per state is adjusted depending on the population. It also helps determine how state legislative districts are drawn.

Amy Baker, the Legislature's lead economist, told a House council in October that Florida will likely gain only one

congressional seat following next year's census —down from the two additional seats state officials had expected to land before the economic slowdown. Some estimates had Florida losing residents this year — the state's first decline since shortly after World War II.

Floridians won't see census forms in their mailboxes until March, with the government asking that they be returned by April 1. Then, from April to July, census takers will visit households that did not return a form by mail. In December, the Census Bureau will deliver population information to the President for Congressional apportionment, and in March of 2011, it delivers redistricting data to the states.

### 1 Response for "Census Takers Start Their Count in March"



1. **JDavis** says:

January 1, 2010 at 10:43 am

I've spoken to a couple of Florida Legislators about a law forbidding A.C.O.R.N. or any of it's contractors/subsidiaries from "assisting" in the Florida census. They think "it's an interesting idea" but I havent heard if there has been legislation put forward.

Congressman Thurston understands the importance of counting the hard to count- in the interest of accuracy. He should therefore understand abstaining from using an organization notorious for shoddy logistics.

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Tuesday, Jan 5, 2010

Posted on Tue, Jan. 05, 2010

## **Fla. population shrinking or expanding? Not even movers or demographers agree on stats**

By DUANE MARSTELLER  
[dmarsteller@bradenton.com](mailto:dmarsteller@bradenton.com)

MANATEE — Are more people moving out of Florida than moving in from other states?

Yes, one national moving company said in a report released Monday.

No, said another national mover that also released a similar report.

Both are probably right, but it's more complex than just counting shipments, a state researcher said.

Atlas Van Lines said it handled 4,847 moves into Florida and 5,419 moves out of the state in 2009, the fourth consecutive year that departures outnumbered arrivals for the company.

But Allied Van Lines said it moved more people in than it took out last year, handling 4,538 moves into Florida and 4,066 moves out of the state.

It was the first time since at least 2005 that arrivals exceeded departures, the company said.

Stan Smith, director of the University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research, said both companies' statistics probably are accurate but have limited value.

"Data from moving companies like that represent a very small proportion of moves in Florida," Smith said. "You can't draw a conclusion on the number of people moving in and out of Florida from that."

So, is the state's population growing or shrinking? Just like the moving companies, demographers don't agree.

Smith's agency estimates that Florida lost 58,294 people from April 1, 2008, to April 1, 2009. Smith said the recession and national housing slump caused Florida's first population decline since the end of World War II.

But the U.S. Census Bureau estimates the state actually gained more than 114,000 people from July 1, 2008, to July 1, 2009, even though some 31,000 more people moved out of Florida than moved in from other states. The Census said the state's overall population grew because of people moving in from other countries and Florida births exceeding deaths.

The differing estimate dates is one possible cause for the disagreement. Another, more likely cause is that the estimates are based on different things.

The Florida agency uses residential building permits and active electric hookups, while the Census largely uses federal income-tax returns and Medicare enrollments. Both also use birth and death records in their calculations.

A more-accurate count won't come until after the 2010 Census is conducted later this year.

So while they differ on Florida, the moving companies' data generally agree on other states.

Both said Texas was the most-popular move-to state, while Michigan and Pennsylvania were the top move-out states. Allied and Atlas also said the number of moves they handled fell last year, which they blamed on the poor economy.

Duane Marsteller, transportation/growth and development reporter, can be reached at 745-7080, ext. 2630.

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1/5/10

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## With billions at stake, U.S. Census wants you to count

By KEVIN WIATROWSKI

[kwiatrowski@tampatrib.com](mailto:kwiatrowski@tampatrib.com)

With 2009 drawn to a close, the U.S. Census Bureau is gearing up for its big day: April 1.

That's the day the federal government will take its 10-year head count of the U.S. population.

The Census Bureau plans to begin training throngs of temporary workers for the door-to-door phase of the count, aimed at ensuring no one gets missed. Those census foot soldiers will knock on the doors of homes that didn't return the Census Bureau's mail-in survey.

Local census offices in Brooksville, Tampa, Brandon, Clearwater and St. Petersburg are hiring workers to go door to door, with the pay ranging from \$11 to \$14 an hour, depending on where people get hired.

Crews of census workers have already made the rounds in the Tampa Bay area, confirming the existence of thousands of homes added to the tax rolls since the last census.

Thousands more homes still need to be added in Hillsborough County and the rest of the region. Local officials have until next month to add to the rolls houses they expect to be built by April 1, said Giftah Niles, a mapping specialist for Temple Terrace.

Hillsborough officials disputed the 2000 count of their population, giving rise to a countywide committee tasked with tracking down every possible person.

The U.S. Constitution requires the census to ensure accurate representation in Congress.

In the 220 years since the first census, the count has become the foundation for deciding how billions in federal and state funds get spent. As a result, city, county and state governments aim to find every person - and therefore every dollar - they can.

"They are really trying this time to get it as close as possible," Niles said.

Across the state, county officials crafted new census tracts for 2010 during the summer. Those tracts will be used to count heads, houses and the population's racial makeup.

Every household will get the same simple form this year asking about who lives there and how big the house is. That's a departure from 2000, when one-sixth of the population got a detailed questionnaire known as the "long form."

The information collected by the long form now gets collected every year through the Census Bureau's American Community Survey.

The official census will spell out exactly how the mid-decade housing boom changed fast-growing

counties such as Pasco, Polk and Manatee.

Census officials based their annual population estimates following the 2000 count on building permits, birth records, death records and other markers. But those estimates frequently get revised based on the formal census tally.

The most recent county-level estimate puts Pasco at more than 470,000 people in 2008 - a 36.6 percent increase over 2000. By comparison, Hillsborough County grew 18 percent in the same period to 1.1 million by mid-2008. Pinellas County lost 1.2 percent of its population over the same period.

Formerly rural areas in central and east Pasco mushroomed with subdivisions. The growth of communities such as Land O' Lakes and Wesley Chapel makes an accurate count there vital to bringing Pasco its share of government support, said Pat Mulieri, the county commission chairwoman.

Mulieri represents many of the areas that saw the most growth this decade. She plans to recruit community groups far and wide to spread the word about participating in the census. "This is important," Mulieri said.

# New rules limit GOP's power over voter districts

<http://www.heraldtribune.com/article/20110107/ARTICLE/101071035/2055/NEWS?Title=New-rules-limit-GOP-s-power-over-voter-districts>

March 7, 2011

Yet a pair of constitutional amendments passed by voters in November to reduce gerrymandering threatens to undermine their power in what traditionally has been the most cherished spoils in all of politics.

And that is not sitting well with Republicans who thought they would have a lot more freedom in redrawing districts for Congress and the Legislature to assure future re-[elections](#).

Bluntly, state Sen. Mike Bennett, R-Bradenton, told more than 250 people at a meeting in Sarasota on Thursday that voters got it wrong when they passed the amendments with more than 60 percent of the vote.

Bennett said the directions in the amendment are contradictory and confusing. He said the amendments call for districts to be drawn without favoring or disfavoring any incumbent or political party. That, he said, is an impossible standard because every line they draw will favor or disfavor someone.

"What we did is very very close to being unworkable," said Bennett, who is the second-highest ranking member of the Senate.

When asked if voters in the five counties he represents made a mistake in voting for the amendments, Bennett did not hesitate.

"Yes," Bennett said emphatically at the Sarasota Tiger Bay meeting.

Instead of putting an end to the misshapen districts that more resemble ink blots than communities, Bennett said the amendment will only result in more lawsuits, more confusion and more gerrymandering.

But Pam Goodman, redistricting director for the League of Women Voters of Florida, said views such as Bennett's are really what should concern voters.

Goodman fears that state legislators will do everything they can to avoid following the directions voters gave them by approving the two amendments last fall.

"They haven't had to follow any rules before," said Goodman, who was at the Tiger Bay meeting debating Bennett. "What the amendments did was clearly lay out rules and regulations for them to follow."

Goodman said if Legislature follows the rules to create compact and contiguous counties it will mean the end to some of the most egregious districts in Florida. Gone would be districts like the 16th Congressional, which stretches north from Palm Beach County, loops around Lake Okeechobee and snakes through eight counties before ending up in Charlotte County.

State House District 55, which lumps Newtown in Sarasota into a district that is mostly made up of St. Petersburg residents, would also be a thing of the past.

One of the worst examples, Goodman said, is Bennett's own District 21. That district runs about 100 miles from [Parrish](#) in northern Manatee County to Fort Myers. The district ducks and weaves through parts of five counties.

But Bennett said he sees a very different future in which the Legislature will be in court the minute lawmakers start trying to alter districts.

Most concerning, Bennett said, is that the amendments are unclear over what to do about minority-majority districts that the federal courts drew to assure black representation in Congress.

Florida has three districts that the federal courts gerrymandered into existence by stringing together black communities over hundreds of miles.

Bennett said those districts may be the worst cases of gerrymandering, but at the same time assure representation in Congress for African-Americans. Before those districts were drawn in the 1990s, Florida had no African-American members of Congress.

Bennett said the minute the Legislature tries to apply the new amendments to those districts, it will trigger a slew of civil rights lawsuits.

"The problem with this constitutional amendment is that the Florida Legislature will do the best job they can and then we will end up in court because there will be an unbelievable flood of lawsuits," Bennett said.

Already U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, and U.S. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami, have sued the state in federal court in Miami contending the amendment is unconstitutional because it violates federal voting rights laws.

Goodman said Florida has some of the worst gerrymandering in the nation.

Currently, Florida has about 600,000 more registered Democrats than Republican voters. But because of the way state districts were drawn up after the 2000 Census, Republicans hold nearly a 2-to-1 edge in the Legislature.

The same is true for Congressional districts, where, despite the state's Democratic majority, Republicans hold a 19-6 advantage.

Goodman said the disparity is a product of a long-abused redistricting process.

"Essentially politicians were choosing their voters instead of voters choosing their politicians," Goodman said.

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orlandosentinel.com/news/local/os-census-brings-jobs-to-central-florida-20100108,0,2555883.story

**OrlandoSentinel.com**

1/8/10

## Census is counting on thousands to apply in Orlando area

### Central Florida's 11.8% jobless rate may mean census positions go fast

By Christine Show, Orlando Sentinel

7:20 PM EST, January 8, 2010

With thousands of U.S. census jobs headed to Central Florida, Dorthy Southworth of Clermont jumped at the opportunity to help her family's beleaguered finances.

"We need a little extra cash," said the 38-year-old Walgreens drugstore employee who recently had her hours and pay cut. "It's to supplement our income. You got to do what you got to do."

The Census Bureau is hiring people nationwide to go door to door to help complete the federal government's once-a-decade task to count every American. In Central Florida, about 1,000 people each will be hired at bureau offices in Orlando, Sanford, Apopka, Daytona Beach, Cocoa, Ocala and Lakeland. The Orlando pay is \$14 an hour.

The jobs — which interested candidates can apply for now — come at a much-needed time as people continue to struggle in the bleak economic climate in Metro Orlando, which has a 11.8 percent unemployment rate. The temporary jobs will begin in early spring and wind down in July.

"We know a lot of people are desperate for positions," said Pam Page-Bellis, the bureau's regional senior media specialist based in Atlanta. "We have positions for anything and everything that has to do with the census."

The Orlando wages are among the highest in the region with salaries at other bureau locations ranging from \$11.25 an hour to \$13.75. The salaries vary based on the workload of a particular area, how urbanized the location of the work is and making sure the pay is competitive with other salaries in the area, Page-Bellis said. There is no extra pay for venturing into a tough neighborhood.

The bulk of hiring will be for jobs as census takers to knock on doors of residents who haven't completed the census form and encourage them to fill out the paperwork on the spot. Most census takers will work 20 to 40 hours a week.

These jobs are convenient as a second job for those already employed, Page-Bellis said, because the hours are accommodating and census takers often work in the evenings and on weekends.



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Unemployed mom makes \$6,495/month working online. Read how she did it. [Read More](#)



"It's an ideal situation for those who can work flexible hours," she said. "A lot of the job can be done in the evening where people are home after work."

Other positions as staff members of the local offices are available for full- and part-time jobs. These slots, which include clerical and administrative work, offer varying salaries.

Page-Bellis said the bureau is expecting a stark difference in job recruitment this year compared with the census in 2000, when the Census Bureau struggled to hire workers. In the Atlanta region, which includes Florida, Alabama and Georgia, the bureau hopes to recruit about 80,000 people, with up to 5,000 applicants per local office. In its initial days of recruitment this month, the region received approximately half of the 5,000 applicants desired from each office. The agency aims to recruit more applicants than there are jobs available to create a database of potential employees from whom they can choose.

"Our economy [in 2000] was totally different," she said. "It's much worse in 2010. We're confident we're going to meet the numbers" needed this year.

Before potential employees can begin knocking on doors, they need to participate in the hiring process. In addition to filling out an application and other paperwork, candidates must sign up to take a basic skills test. The 30-minute assessment will measure a candidate's reading, writing and fundamental math skills.

Job seekers can take a practice skills test at [2010censusjobs.com](http://2010censusjobs.com), which also provides detailed information about how to apply and how to schedule to take a census test. If a candidate is dissatisfied with his test score, he can schedule a new test on a different day, according to the agency. In Central Florida, testing locations are scattered throughout the region in dozens of locations, with options available several times a day.

Even though the outlook for job applicants appears strong, Page-Bellis hopes the bureau will be able to fill all open positions.

"We have to have many more people in the system," she said. "We're still looking for thousands more to test."

When Southworth completed her exam, she said it was tricky because similar questions are asked in different ways. She's keeping her fingers crossed that she'll get a callback for a job.

"It was a brainteaser," said Southworth, who isn't picky about what kind of job she gets. "I'll go door to door, work in the office. I'll do whatever becomes available. I'll be happy either way."

*Christine Show can be reached at [cshow@orlandosentinel.com](mailto:cshow@orlandosentinel.com), at 352-742-5917 or on Twitter @showc.*

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1/14/10

Home Opinion

## Finally, a chance to rein in Florida's 'ink blot' political districts

BY RON LITTLEPAGE | STORY UPDATED AT 7:17 AM ON THURSDAY, JAN. 14, 2010



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There's a move afoot that's sending shivers down the spine of Corrine Brown.

Here's the dastardly language of a proposal some of her fellow Floridians are pushing:

"Congressional districts or districting plans may not be drawn to favor or disfavor an incumbent political party.

"Districts shall not be drawn to deny racial or language minorities the equal opportunity to participate in the political process and elect representatives of their choice.

"Districts must be contiguous.

"Unless otherwise required, districts must be compact, as equal in population as feasible, and where feasible must make use of existing city, county and geographic boundaries."

In other words, districts that resemble an ink blot to favor special groups or incumbents would no longer be allowed?

The horror!

The language is a summary of a proposed amendment to the state constitution.

If it gets enough signatures on petitions to be put on the ballot this fall and is approved by voters, that would pretty much do away with the 3rd Congressional District as it is now shaped, which Brown has represented since 1993.

The district had been outrageously gerrymandered the year before to ensure an African-American from Jacksonville would win.

The district snakes its way through nine counties from Jacksonville to Orlando picking up African-American neighborhoods along the way.

Brown says she's not fighting the amendment to save her job but for the good of Florida.

And we believe that, just as we believe the Age of Aquarius has arrived on the political scene and peace and harmony will reign.

The district was wrong when it was designed in 1992.

It's wrong now, as are the other gerrymandered districts that all but guarantee congressional seats go to minorities.

I wrote in 1992 that I was offended by the concept that only African-Americans are capable of representing African-American and only Hispanics are capable of representing Hispanics.

I'm also offended by the concept that whites won't vote for a minority candidate, no matter how qualified.

Barack Obama won Florida, with support from whites, and Marco Rubio is playing havoc with Charlie Crist in the U.S. Senate race.

But Brown shouldn't be the only one nervous if this amendment and a similar one requiring the same things for the state's legislative districts are approved by voters.

The party in power in Tallahassee, currently Republicans, would no longer be able to design districts that make no sense other than to keep that party in power.

To get on the ballot, the amendment on congressional redistricting will require 676,811 valid signatures.

As of last Friday, according to the state's elections Web site, 567,542 had been turned in.

The idea must be popular in Jacksonville with more than 50,000 of those signatures coming from Duval County.

The numbers are similar for the amendment on state legislative redistricting.

Congressional and legislative districts that make sense.

The horror!

ron.littlepage@jacksonville.com, (904) 359-4284

### User Comments



#### congressional districts

Submitted by raffi on Thu. 1/14/2010 at 8:05 am

When I moved here I was shocked that my congressman, Cliff Stearns, was from Ocala. Then a few years ago I wondered why a guy from Orlando was challenging Corrine Brown in the primary. Then I looked at the district maps for Florida and saw why and I also realized that I was within about 5 miles of Ms. Brown's district. That wouldn't have worked well for me because Ms. Brown and I are about as far apart on the political spectrum as you can be!!!

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#### Minorities

Submitted by STTAB on Thu. 1/14/2010 at 8:19 am

**tampabay.com** Know it now.

1/18/10

## \$2.1M ad blitz will sell census

By Steve Bousquet, Times/Herald Tallahassee Bureau

Published Monday, January 18, 2010

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TALLAHASSEE — The search will soon be under way in Florida for every Hispanic, farmworker, college student and member of other historically hard-to-count groups in a marketing blitz aimed at improving the 2010 census count.

Billions of federal dollars hinge on an accurate count. But with minority and transient populations on the rise in Florida, state officials say it will be harder than ever to get the count right. A mix of old and new media — TV, radio, billboards and social networking sites — will all be employed in the effort.

"Florida will be facing major challenges in the 2010 census," said Clyde Diao, Gov. Charlie Crist's census liaison. He cited factors such as poverty, rising unemployment, language barriers, a growing minority population and a housing foreclosure crisis that has displaced many people from their homes.

Floridians will soon be bombarded with messages reminding them to fill out census forms, part of a \$2.1 million outreach.

A total of 31 public relations and marketing firms have teamed up with grass roots organizations to seek all or part of the money. Crist's office is expected to divvy up the contract Wednesday.

"The hard-to-count populations have a fear of government. They don't necessarily want to be counted," said Ayla Anderson, an analyst in Crist's office. "So we have to incorporate trusted voices in the community to ensure that they will fill out their census questionnaires or answer their door when the enumerator comes knocking."

In the next few weeks, every Florida household will get a census form in the mail. In March, census takers will begin knocking on doors, looking for people who didn't respond.

In April, the state's marketing blitz begins.

The state's ever-shifting demographics saw continued growth in the nonwhite population over the past decade, from 34.6 percent in the 2000 census to 39.2 percent in 2007.

The state has identified 10 groups to be strategically targeted by marketers. They are American Indians, Asian-American and Pacific Islanders, African-Americans and Caribbean-Americans, college students, disabled people, Hispanics, the homeless, part-time residents, migrant farmworkers and rural residents. In addition, blacks and Hispanics in South Florida will be targeted separately, bringing the total of targeted audiences to 12.

The state says those groups are identified by the U.S. Census Bureau as living in areas with low mail response rates.

In the last census in 2000, Florida's census response rate was 63 percent, below the national average of 67 percent and at the bottom among the 10 most populous states. A firm that played a prominent role in the previous two census counts, the Florida Association of Broadcasters, is again seeking to do the work.

The group has teamed with Volunteer Florida, a statewide network of grass roots organizations, to get the word out this time.

"I'm certainly hopeful," said Pat Roberts, president of the broadcasters group. "There is nobody that understands the importance of the head count more than the broadcasters, because it affects our ratings."

The broadcasters applied for all 12 components of the outreach. So did Ron Sachs Communications, a prominent PR firm that has teamed up with an array of community organizations, from the Florida Farm Bureau to the Redlands Christian Migrant Association in South Miami-Dade.

In its proposal, Sachs urged the Governor's Office to hire one vendor to run the entire program, warning that choosing multiple vendors could lead to "inconsistent results and haphazard messaging" and would be difficult to manage.

A year ago, Crist created the 45-member Complete Count Committee, which helped to oversee creation of the marketing plan. A five-member evaluation team will rate the applicants based on their plans and how efficiently they would spend the money.

The team includes two Miamians: Luis De Rosa of the Puerto Rican Chamber of Commerce of South Florida and Horacio Soberon-Ferrer of the Alliance for Aging. The others are Bill Peeler, a Lake City veteran; Davin Suggs of the Florida Association of Counties; and Hue Reynolds of the state Department of Education.

It's common in highly competitive contract awards for an unsuccessful bidder to challenge the state's decision. Such a protest in the census outreach program would delay the outreach effort and hinder the state's efforts to improve the count.

*Steve Bousquet can be reached at [bousquet@sptimes.com](mailto:bousquet@sptimes.com) or (850) 224-7263.*

## ON THE WEB

### Making the count

The state's official census Web site is [sunshinecensus2010.com](http://sunshinecensus2010.com).

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Printed on page A1

## Crist, Rubio spar on census

### SENATE RACE: Governor's rival opposes inclusion of illegal immigrants in count

By GARY FINEOUT

H-T Capital Correspondent

Published: Wednesday, February 3, 2010 at 1:00 a.m.

Republican U.S. Senate candidate Marco Rubio has come out against including illegal immigrants in the national census -- even though doing so could significantly reduce Florida's political power and share of federal funding.

Rubio's stance sets him at odds not only with Gov. Charlie Crist, but also with Republicans in the Florida Legislature who are cranking up efforts to track down and find every resident who lives in the state.

Rubio's opposition is largely theoretical -- the census has already started and illegals are being counted -- but it reflects his efforts to appeal to hard-line conservatives in the contest against the more moderate Crist.

The census will have vast political and financial ramifications for the state, with some estimates suggesting that Florida may pick up additional seats in Congress after it is finished.

A Census Bureau representative said on Tuesday that \$400 billion in federal aid is determined by formulas that rely on population numbers derived from the census.

When asked whether illegal immigrants should count on things like the number of seats that Florida should have in Congress, Rubio initially said last week that he was not sure and that he wanted to "research it more."

"I think there's good arguments on both sides of it," said Rubio, a former House speaker and Republican from Miami. Rubio, however, also said that the census should have an "accurate count" in order to know how "bad of an immigration problem we have."

But, later, a spokesman for Rubio's Senate campaign said that Rubio did "not support a congressional reapportionment process that counts illegal immigrant populations when allocating seats." Alex Burgos said Rubio's position "stems from a concern about rightful representation in Congress and ensuring that every voter has an equal voice."

Since entering the Senate race, Rubio has taken a hard stance against illegal immigration, saying he would have opposed a controversial immigration measure that was backed by former U.S. Sen. Mel Martinez and Sen. John McCain.

But when Rubio, the son of Cuban immigrants, was speaker, he came under fire because anti-immigration bills sponsored by Republican legislators never came up for a vote in the Florida House. Rubio in 2006 also voted for a bill that would allowed the children of illegal immigrants to pay the same tuition rate as residents, but the measure was blocked by the Florida Senate.

Florida ranks third among all states in the number of illegal immigrants.

Crist went to North Miami on Tuesday to urge everyone to participate in the census.

"The people of Florida represent a rich legacy of diverse cultures, backgrounds and experiences, and want to be represented accordingly," Crist said. "Florida families should participate in the 2010 census to ensure our state receives the funding necessary to meet the needs of our citizens."

Every 10 years, the Constitution requires a count of "the whole number of persons in each state" to determine how many seats each state gets in Congress.

Residents across Florida will begin receiving a census form in March but it will not ask them whether they are here legally. The state is spending \$2.1 million to encourage people to cooperate with the census.

Some conservative Republicans from other states last year tried unsuccessfully to get the Census Bureau to ask questions about citizenship. Sen. David Vitter, R-La., argued at the time that states with large populations of illegal immigrants would be rewarded and states like his would be penalized.

A 2007 report by the Department of Homeland Security estimated there were 11.5 million illegal immigrants in the country and 980,000 living in Florida.

Rubio's urging that illegal immigrants not be factored into Congressional representation and federal funding is opposed by many legislators.

Rep. Dean Cannon, R-Winter Park, who has held hearings on the census and reapportionment, said that it was important that Florida have as accurate a count as possible because of the potential ramifications.

"It's just important that the count be accurate regardless of their status," Cannon said.

This story appeared in print on page A1

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2/5/10

February 5, 2010

## Census tour allays Hispanics' fears in Immokalee

By Chris Umpierre  
cumpierre@news-press.com

After a long day working in Immokalee's tomato fields, Guillermo Ramos exited a beat-up bus with about 50 other farm workers and gravitated toward a blue tent across the street.

The tent had "El Censo 2010" splashed across the top. Ramos, who came to Immokalee from Mexico five years ago, had never heard of such a thing.

Ramos picked up a complimentary Census 2010 bag and listened to census workers explain how the count could bring more funds to Immokalee.

"I'm afraid of immigration coming if I fill the form," Ramos said in Spanish. "If they find you, they'll send you back to your country and you'll never come back."

The 2010 Census Portrait of America Road Tour made a stop Thursday in Immokalee to allay fears of Ramos and other migrant farm workers.

Census workers explained they never ask for Social Security numbers or whether residents are documented. They also said they don't share information with government agencies and that an accurate count will bring more government funding to Immokalee.

Photos: View a gallery of Thursday's census campaign in Immokalee.

"We're reminding them about the hurricanes that hit this state in 2004 and 2005 and how funds are allocated by population," tour spokeswoman Helga Silva said. "If you say there's only 300 people living here and there's really 3,000, then the government is going to send aid for 300 people."

Hispanics, who make up 71 percent of Immokalee's 20,000 residents, have historically been undercounted. A review of the 2000 census showed the bureau didn't count about 1.2 million Hispanics.

Just 69 percent of Hispanic households returned the census forms mailed to them in the 2000 census, compared to a return rate of 80.8 percent for white households.

Response rates for Collier and Lee in 2000 were 54 and 59 percent, respectively. That was below the national (67 percent) and Florida (63) rates.

"When you think of the number of migrant people in this area, 56 percent is unacceptable," said Richard Rice, executive director of the Greater Eastern Collier Chamber of Commerce. "We'll get it up this time."

Getting an accurate count could be more difficult this year because of the nation's economic woes. Because of foreclosures and job losses, many families have moved in with each other.



"They're afraid to say there are 13 people living here when the house was rented for four," Silva said. "We're telling people that we don't share our info with landlords."

Census workers face up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine if they unlawfully disclose information.

"I'm going to fill it out," said Sebastian Guillen Ferro, a 39-year-old farm worker who visited the census tent Thursday. "I'm not afraid of immigration. The only people who are afraid are the people with records."

Ramos agreed.

"I think this is good because it helps the people and all the kids," he said.

Other Hispanics are wary. A group of about 30 farmworkers leaned on bicycles about 30 feet from the tent Thursday. They seemed tentative about approaching the census table.

The 2010 Census Road Tour, which will be traveling to more than 800 events nationwide before the April 1 decennial count, is trying to raise the count by hiring local people who can relate to the community.

Juanita Mainster, Florida's partnership coordinator for the 2010 Census, was once a farmworker in Homestead and Immokalee. She said she was born in the fields and was deported before becoming a U.S. citizen.

"I know the hardships that they're going through, the language problems," Mainster said. "But this benefits migrant workers and nonmigrant workers."

Thursday's event included a Haitian component. The census had several Creole speakers talk about the significance of the census.

"Some of us don't mingle with American culture," said Chenel Pierre, who owns a social services business in Immokalee. "Haitians seek information from people we trust. That's why we need events like this."

## Additional Facts

**Through March:** The Fort Myers census office will hold job fairs throughout Southwest Florida. The dates and locations for the fairs haven't been finalized.

**March:** The Fort Myers office will finish hiring about 1,200 employees.

**March 15:** Households will receive a 10-question census form. A prepaid envelope will be included to mail back the form. Those who do not respond will receive a second mailing. If the form is still not returned, a census taker will visit your home.

**April 1:** Census Day, the deadline for questionnaires to be returned.

**April-July:** Census takers will visit households that didn't return a questionnaire by mail.

December: The U.S. Census Bureau will deliver population counts to President Barack Obama to begin the process of dividing the 435 House seats proportionately among 50 states.

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2/10/10



February 10, 2010

## Our views: By the numbers (Feb. 10)

### Participate in census so Brevard gets fair share of funds for schools, roads

Don't buy the negative spin about the 2010 U.S. Census, which begins in March.

Some groups are spouting bizarre conspiracy theories about how the census is dangerously intrusive — governmental snooping that could be used for devious purposes or lead to identify theft — and encouraging people not to take part.

Unfortunately, too many are falling for the falsehoods and may blow off filling out their census form, even though taking part is required by the U.S. Constitution.

A recent Pew Research Center poll found nearly one in five people say they aren't sure they will participate in the high-stakes head count, mostly younger and lower-income adults. Some say they're not interested, but others cite distrust of how government will use the data.

Florida House Speaker-designate Dean Cannon recently shot down that nonsense, saying, "No matter which region or party you're from, it's in Florida's interests to get everyone counted."

The conservative Winter Park Republican correctly stressed the importance of all residents filling out census forms because of the big benefits a correct accounting of the population brings.

That includes helping determine representation in Congress. Florida is expected to gain one seat in the House — meaning Sunshine State voters will have more sway in political decisions that affect their lives.

Census data also are used by federal officials in divvying up dollars for programs that range from hospitals, job training centers, schools, senior centers, highway and bridge construction to emergency management, including help for coastal communities, like those along the Space Coast, in planning for response to natural disasters.

All told, census numbers are used to determine how more than \$300 billion in federal funds are spent each year on infrastructure and services.

For Brevard and Florida to be allocated a fair share of those badly needed resources, the most accurate census count possible is required. Florida lost \$91,641,000 in federal funding from 2002-2012 because of an undercount of 200,670 people in 2000, according to Kidd Group, which provides census education data for elected leaders, such as Brevard County School Board members.

State and local governments also use census numbers when planning infrastructure, such as new roads, and crafting land-use policies. Businesses depend on census information to make decisions about locations and services offered.

As for privacy concerns, the confidentiality of the information you provide on the census — including names, addresses and telephone numbers — is guaranteed by multiple layers of law that impose severe penalties for any breaches and are strictly enforced.

Those laws also ensure that your answers can't be used against you by the government, and census data is not turned over to immigration officials.

So fill out the simple 10-question census form when it arrives in your mailbox in March.

Here's another enormous benefit the census brings to recession-wracked Floridians:

The U.S. Census Bureau is hiring 1.3 million temporary, part-time workers to help take the count, including thousands in Central Florida. Brevard workers will be paid \$13.75 per hour, and persons who speak more than one language are in high demand.

To find out how to become a census taker, go online to [2010census.gov](http://2010census.gov) or call the jobs hotline at 1-866-861-2010. You also can get information from the local census office in Palm Bay at 914-1040.

Make sure you and everyone in your household is counted this year — it's the law, and it's the smart thing to do.

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2/10/16

**OrlandoSentinel.com**

## Florida has fewer illegal immigrants than 10 years ago, report says

### Fewer jobs and stricter enforcement meant immigrants stayed home, Homeland Security study says

Victor Manuel Ramos

Orlando Sentinel

8:14 PM EST, February 10, 2010

Florida's illegal immigrant population has significantly declined — with 80,000 fewer in the state since 2000, according to a new report.

And the drop here was even steeper than in the rest of the country, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security report showed. The number of unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. declined by about 1 million people from their peak in 2007, dropping to about 10.8 million people living in the country illegally as of 2009, the report stated.

Demographers and immigration advocates attribute the decline to the loss of jobs in fields like construction, stepped-up border security and an increase in deportations during the last few years of the Bush administration.

Ana Luisa Treviño, a community organizer in Apopka with the Farmworker Association of Florida, said many immigrant families lost economic gains made during years their labor was in high demand.

"Many lost their jobs, spent their savings and lost their homes and decided to go back to their countries or move to other places," Treviño said.

The Homeland Security report compared the number of legal immigrants to the foreign-born population tracked by the U.S. Census Bureau. The unauthorized population includes people who crossed the border illegally and those who live here on expired visas.

Florida's drop brought the state's population of illegal immigrants to about 720,000 as of 2009, after having reached a peak of up to 1 million by other estimates. That's a 10 percent decline since 2000.



While those calculations "are subject to large errors," demographer William Frey said they make sense as part of a larger exodus from the state, mostly attributed to the recession.

"Undocumented immigrants, like other immigrants, have dipped noticeably due to the drying up of economic opportunities," said Frey, with the Metropolitan Policy Program at The Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. "The fact that Florida has been the poster child for the nation's economically driven migration slowdown is consistent with Florida showing the only decline in undocumented immigrants" among large states.

But Jeffrey Passel, a senior researcher with the Pew Hispanic Center in Washington, D.C., said the numbers don't necessarily reflect a massive flight of immigrants. Immigrants have always left the country, but usually more came in than left, replenishing the population. Other studies show that fewer people are leaving Mexico to enter the U.S. illegally, he said.

"When there are jobs available in the U.S., more people come and when unemployment goes up and we go into recession, fewer people come," Passel said.

Whatever the reason, the change has not quelled the immigration debate. Several groups that want legalization of undocumented immigrants are delivering hundreds of thousands of postcards to members of Congress, while pro-enforcement advocates are working to increase state restrictions.

"This is the perfect time to reform our immigration system because we are having fewer people come into the country, so you don't fix a bridge during rush hour," said Jen Smyers, an associate for Immigration and Refugee Policy with Church World Service, an interfaith coalition advocating for legalization of immigrants. "We have to fix it now so that when we do see an uptick, we have a system that actually functions."

On the other side of the debate, the pro-enforcement group Floridians for Immigration Enforcement is calling for changes in Florida law that would require the use of the "E-Verify" federal database to check the legal status of workers.

"Illegal aliens will self-deport when they don't have jobs," group vice president David Caulkett said. "That is why it is imperative for the Florida Legislature to enact E-Verify this session, so jobs go to Florida citizens, not illegal aliens."

Víctor Manuel Ramos can be reached at [vramos@orlandosentinel.com](mailto:vramos@orlandosentinel.com) or 407-420-6186.

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## South Florida Sun-Sentinel.com

### Florida sees decline in illegal immigrants

It's the only state to experience drop in numbers; experts cite economic downturn

By Gregory Lewis, Sun Sentinel

9:59 PM EST, February 11, 2010

Florida was the only state to see a net loss of undocumented immigrants from 2000 to 2009, the federal government says in a new report.

The state's foreign-born illegal residents totaled 720,000 in January 2009 — 80,000 fewer than in 2000. Still, Florida has the third-highest number behind California and Texas, according to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security report released Wednesday.

"I believe it has everything to do with the economic downturn, especially related to real estate and related to jobs in construction and services," said William Frey, a demographer at the Brookings Institution, a Washington, D.C., think tank.

"California and Texas showed decreases in the last two years, but stay at levels above 2000," Frey said. "In Florida's case, the decline is more severe, perhaps due to a more severe shift in the economy. Unlike Texas and California, Florida sustained two straight years of domestic migration losses."

Last year the U.S. Census Bureau reported a decrease in all foreign-born Florida residents -- those here legally and illegally -- which was borne out by the numbers in South Florida.

In Broward County, the number was estimated at 518,965, down 3 percent from 2007. In Miami-Dade County, with a foreign-born population of 1.19 million, the decline was less than a percentage point. But in Palm Beach County, the number of residents born outside the United States grew 5.3 percent in 2008, to 280,460.

"It is symbolic as much as anything," said Frey. "Florida has been a major immigration magnet for a long time and synonymous with immigration to the U.S. So if there is a downturn in the immigrant population in Florida, it underscores the state's fundamental economic problems."

Gregory Lewis can be reached at [glewis@sunsentinel.com](mailto:glewis@sunsentinel.com) or 954-572-2084.

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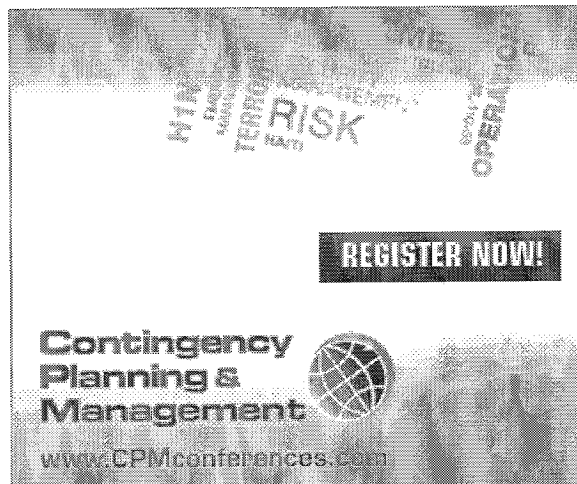
## Census struggles to solve IT problems in time for 2010 count

With official count set for April 1, GAO cites performance problems

- By [William Jackson](#)
- Feb 25, 2010

The decennial headcount already has begun in some places and with the official Census Day -- April 1 -- little more than a month away, problems with key information technology systems continue to plague the Census Bureau, the Government Accountability Office told a Congressional panel.

"Although the bureau has made progress in testing and deploying IT systems for the 2010 Census, significant performance issues have been identified with both the workflow management system as well as with the Decennial Applicant Personnel and Payroll System," Robert Goldenkoff, GAO's director of strategic issues, said in testimony.



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[Census prepares IT for 2010](#)

[Census deploys Windows Mobile for field data collection](#)

Not all IT systems will be needed right away, he said. Some will be used in processing data over the next year, rather than in the immediate counting. But time for deploying and testing the systems is running out.

"With key deadlines looming, it will be important for the bureau to identify the defects affecting the IT systems, test solutions, and quickly implement changes," Goldenkoff said.

Goldenkoff made his statements Feb. 23 in testimony before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information, Federal Services and International Security.

The Census is constitutionally required every 10 years, and the results are used to apportion congressional representatives and for distribution of federal funds. The count actually began Jan. 25 in the Inupiat Eskimo village of Noorvik, Alaska, north of the Arctic Circle. Although the bureau is supposed to conduct a one-day census on April 1, the count actually will be spread over several weeks, as forms are mailed and returned, and in-person visits are made. State populations for congressional apportionment are due by Dec. 31, and breakdowns of local populations for congressional redistricting are due by April 1, 2011.

Goldenkoff called the 2010 Census "unprecedented in its scope and complexity" and identified several problem areas, including inadequate cost estimates, in addition to IT systems. Overall, the bureau has made progress in many areas in an effort to ensure a smooth and accurate count, he said, but he predicted that the process would not be easy.

"The performance of the IT systems notwithstanding, a successful outcome is far from guaranteed," he said. "Experience from past enumerations suggests that various glitches are all but inevitable once the head count is fully underway."



Given this forecast, it is important for the bureau to identify and fix problems as quickly as possible and to keep operations on schedule, he said.

GAO identified the 2010 Census as a high-risk program in 2008, and in March 2009 identified problems with testing IT systems. Since then, improvements have been made, including the naming of a testing officer to monitor testing activities. The bureau also completed limited end-to-end testing of the Paper-Based Operations Control System, an in-house workflow management system developed when the bureau was forced to give up its plan to have field workers use hand-held computers in gathering information. It also performed tests on the Decennial Applicant Personnel and Payroll System, which will be used to pay more than 1 million temporary employees.

During tests in December, the DAPPS failed and other key systems, including PBOCS, performed slowly. System communication errors were also found. Bureau officials said many of the problems have been solved, but others remain and new issues have been found that will have to be resolved and retested.

In addition to DAPPS and PBOCS, the bureau will rely on six other key IT systems and much testing on them remains to be done:

- Headquarters processing — Universe Control and Management, which organizes files into enumeration “universes.” Deployment of remaining functionality is planned for September.
- Headquarters processing — Response Processing System, used to help eliminate overcounts. The system will be needed in February 2011 but final testing will not be completed until December.
- Master Address File/topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing System. Geographic information will be needed in April and testing still is under way.
- Field Data Collection Automation. Development and testing has been completed.
- Decennial Response Integration System. Needed in February; testing still under way.
- Data Access and Dissemination System II, to replace the legacy system for publishing data. Will be needed beginning in December and testing still is ongoing.

“In summary, key IT functions — namely the bureau’s personnel and payroll system and the PBOCS — continue to face performance problems and have not yet demonstrated the ability to function reliably under full operational loads,” Goldenkoff said. “With key deadlines looming, it will be important for the bureau to identify the defects affecting the IT systems, test solutions, and quickly implement changes.”

#### About the Author

William Jackson is a senior writer for GCN and the author of the [CyberEye](#) column.



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## County near the bottom in federal funds received

**Report: Brevard gets a third of average**

BY SUSANNE CERVENKA • FLORIDA TODAY •  
March 9, 2010

Brevard County gets about \$459 per person from the U.S. government based on the Census, according to a report released Monday.

That's less than a third of the national average, and it puts the Space Coast among the bottom five metro areas that receive dollars based on population. Nationwide, about \$1,470 per person was doled out in 2008 based on census data.

The county received more than \$246 million in federal funds in 2008, according to the Brookings Institution, a Washington, D.C.-based research group.

Federal funding tied to census data is related to income inequity -- states with high-income levels and high poverty levels received higher per capita funding, the report shows.

"The best thing a community can do is count everyone that they can count," said the report's author, Andrew Reamer.

The total amount Brevard County received should encourage people to participate, said Denise Carter, vice chairwoman of Brevard County's Complete Count Committee.

"I would hope that \$246 million would encourage folks to fill out the Census and see what the impact would have on agencies and cities in Brevard County," she said.

Filling out the census survey also is important because under-counts hit local coffers twice, Reamer said.

The Brookings report identified 215 federal programs that use census data when distributing funds. In 2008, states received about 80 percent of the federal funding handed out, which then was distributed locally based on population. Reamer said that a low count means a community won't

receive their fair share directly from the federal government or indirectly via the state.

"If there's slightly less participation, it's not going to affect too much the amount the state gets overall. But when it comes time to hand out the money, then you might be impacted," he said.

An accurate count also helps Florida with Medicaid funding, Reamer said. The federal money distributed is based on total population, not just those eligible for the service. A higher overall census count means the state will spend less of its money on the health-care entitlement program, freeing up those funds for other services such as education and roads.

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## Florida fails to get its fair share of census aid

Chris Umpierre • [cumpierre@news-press.com](mailto:cumpierre@news-press.com) •  
March 9, 2010

**Read more about the 2010 census, view videos and photos, and explore how the census could change your district**

**1:10 A.M.** — The Fort Myers-Cape Coral metropolitan area received the second-least per capita census-guided federal assistance in the country in 2008, according to an academic study released today.

Fort Myers-Cape Coral received \$245 million, or almost \$414 per person, in 2008, making it the second lowest federally assisted area, behind Sarasota.

Albany, N.Y., received the most federal assistance with \$5,217 per person, according to the study by Washington, D.C.-based Brookings Institution.

Lower income limits for Medicaid eligibility, outdated federal funding formulas that favor Rust Belt states and inaccurate census population counts are three reasons why the Fort Myers-Cape Coral area and Florida as a whole receive fewer census-guided federal dollars than other metro areas, the study's author, Andrew Reamer, said.

The \$447 billion in federal funding that was distributed nationally in 2008 went toward health, housing, transportation, education and agriculture.

"Certainly, this concerns me," Cape Coral Mayor John Sullivan said. "I'd like to see us get a bigger piece of the pie, and I don't understand how money can be distributed on such an unequal basis."

Florida ranked 48th among the 50 U.S. states in federal assistance in 2008, according to the Brookings study. Reamer blamed Florida's conservative Medicaid program.

Medicaid comprises 58 percent of federal assistance dispensed in 2008.

"Florida made a decision not to cover as many families as other states, so you're spending less

money. Therefore, less money is coming to you from the federal government because Medicaid is a reimbursement program," Reamer said.

The Medicaid income limit in Florida for a working parent was 56 percent of the government's official poverty line in 2008. The poverty level for three persons in a family is \$18,310, according to the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services.

States such as Delaware (106 percent), Illinois (191) and Maine (206) had higher Medicaid income limits in 2008.

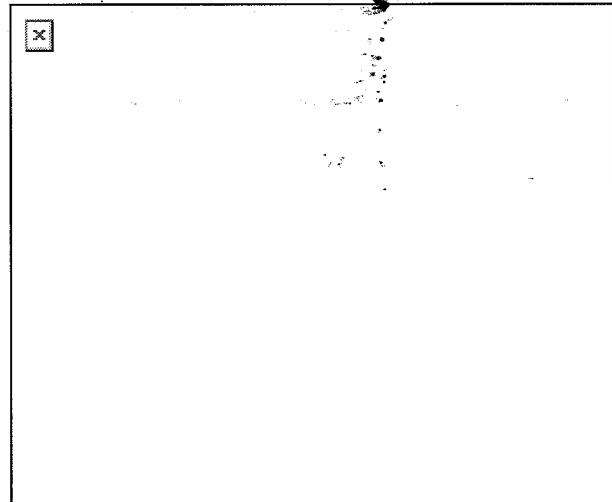
Florida's reimbursement rate for Medicaid was 57 percent in 2008, meaning that the Sunshine State received 57 cents for every dollar spent on Medicaid. Other states posted 70 percent reimbursement rates, Reamer said.

Dr. Judith Hartner, the director of the Lee County Health Department, and Ann Arnall, Lee County's human services director, weren't surprised by the study's findings.

Lee's Department of Human Services serves as a collaborative hub for federal, state and local resources designated to aid economically disadvantaged individuals and families.

"Federal funding formulas haven't kept up with population growth (in Florida)," Arnall said. "The formulas Washington is using are sometimes outdated."

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Arnall pointed to the community services block federal grant, which provides direct assistance for utilities. Arnall said the funding formula was written in 1981, years before Florida's population boom.

In 2008, Lee County residents received \$6.28 for every individual below the poverty level, Arnall said. The District of Columbia, in comparison, received \$84.64 per person.

"We need to do a better job of fighting for an adequate share and make sure formulas are updated in Washington as our situation changes," Arnall said.

Kurt Wenner of Florida TaxWatch, a nonprofit research institute that calls itself a watchdog of the public's tax dollars, said Florida has historically fared poorly in securing federal assistance.

"In the 1970s, Florida made a a conscious decision not to rely on federal grants fearing that they would dry up," Wenner said. "Because of that historical approach, we're not as sophisticated in getting them. For example, we don't have a centralized office in the state responsible for grants."

Getting an accurate count in the 2010 census is one way Lee County could get a larger portion of federal assistance dollars. The decennial population count will officially begin on Census Day April 1. Census questionnaires will be mailed locally between March 15-24.

Just 59 percent of Lee County households mailed back the 2000 census questionnaire. The county's response rate was 4 percentage points below the Florida average and 8 percentage points below the national average.

"For most programs, there's a zero sum game when it comes to distributing money, so raising the response rate, especially of hard-to-count populations, is crucial," Reamer said. "The smaller a state's undercount, the more federal funding it will receive."

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## OrlandoSentinel.com

### Florida loses out on census-based dollars, study shows

Andres Viglucci, The Miami Herald

8:40 AM EST, March 10, 2010

A new think-tank study released on the eve of the 2010 census has some eye-opening news about the decennial count's import for Floridians: In a national ranking, the amount of census-based aid flowing to the state and the three-county South Florida region puts both in the bottom five.

The spread between the federal aid flowing to Florida and the top-ranked states based on census population figures is significant, according to a Brookings Institution report released Tuesday.

Among the top states, Vermont and New York receive \$2,873 and \$2,301 per resident, respectively. Florida, by contrast, gets \$901 per resident, better only than Nevada, Virginia and Colorado. The national average is \$1,469 per person.

Broward and Miami-Dade counties each ranked well in the bottom half of the nation's 200 biggest counties.

The Brookings Institution report is the first comprehensive examination of the more than \$400 billion worth of federal aid from programs that use census population figures as a basis for distribution.

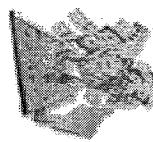
The study doesn't get into the reasons for the disparities. In Florida's case, the author says the principal cause may be the state's relatively stingy Medicaid program, which limits the federal dollars flowing in from Washington. Medicaid spending accounts for nearly 60 percent of the money distributed to states based on census data.

But what the study does confirm, said author Andrew Reamer, is what census boosters have argued for years: that ensuring as accurate a count as possible can increase the flow of significant amounts of federal money to states and localities from some 215 government programs, including health care for the poor, highways and transportation and schools.

And that is especially significant this year, he said, when the Obama administration's economic stimulus program will pump even more into states and communities based on Census results, boosting the total to be distributed to well over \$500 billion.

"States that are less aggressive are going to lose out," said Reamer, a fellow at Brookings's Metropolitan Policy Program. "The allocation among states for many programs is based on population counts, or parts

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of the population like the number of kids in poverty. It's a zero-sum game, so it's in every state's interest to raise its population numbers."

Why Florida fares relatively poorly cannot be explained from his study, Reamer said.

But the state's income eligibility level for Medicaid, the health care program for the poor, is high compared with most states', he noted. That means many poor people who could qualify for coverage — and draw additional federal reimbursement to Florida — do not.

Another factor: States and the federal government share Medicaid expenses, with the level of federal reimbursement set according to poverty levels. Because Florida's percentage of poor is close to the national average, federal reimbursement rates are relatively low.

Because of how the formula is calculated, however, boosting the state population count reduces residents' average income and increases the percentage of the population in poverty, Reamer said. Florida would collect \$792 for each resident added to its census count in 2010 from Medicaid alone, he said.

"I do get the sense that Medicaid explains a lot," Reamer said. "Florida, when it comes to covering working parents, is very conservative. The state is not spending a lot of money on Medicaid relative to other states, but the other result is that it's not getting as much from the federal government."

Since Florida is also competing with other states for limited funds for highways and transportation, schools and housing grants that are based on income and population, ensuring as full a count as possible would likely boost its chances of getting its fair share of aid, Reamer said.

Another likely factor in the disparity in aid distribution is a significant and perennial undercount of the state's minority and immigrant populations, particularly in South Florida. Demographers say past head counts have missed significant numbers of black, Hispanic and immigrant residents of the state, who tend to be poorer and could help the state and localities qualify for additional federal aid.

"I'm surprised Florida doesn't fare so well, but not totally surprised," said Oliver Kerr, a demographer and analyst at Florida International University's Metropolitan Center. "Basically, minority populations are undercounted, Hispanics more so than blacks, and we have a larger proportion of minorities than most places."

The report's release was timed to coincide with the start of the decennial head count. Census forms will begin hitting mailboxes on Monday.

Although the Census Bureau has estimated the amount of federal aid that hinges on Census 2010 figures at more than \$400 billion annually, no one had looked at how aid has been distributed, Reamer said. The money includes Medicaid — which accounts for \$260 billion, or 58 percent of the total — as well as \$37 billion for highway construction, \$23 billion for education and Head Start, and \$15 billion in housing vouchers, among other programs.

What Reamer found was confirmation of the Census Bureau's estimate and wide variation in aid received by state, county and region.

The vast bulk of the money, more than 80 percent, goes to states, which then distribute a portion to local governments. Counties and municipalities can also receive some aid directly.

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## Minority firms sue over Florida's awarding of \$2.1 million U.S. Census awareness contracts

By Lee Logan, Times/Herald Tallahassee Bureau

Published Friday, March 12, 2010

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TALLAHASSEE — Four minority-owned public relations firms filed a lawsuit against the state on Friday, arguing that a recent contract awarded to publicize the Census was discriminatory.

On Feb. 26, the state awarded a \$2.1 million contract to five marketing firms. The awareness campaign was split into 12 groups of historically under-counted communities, such as minorities, college students and the homeless.

The four black firms bid on two portions of the contract to reach out to black residents in south Florida and those in central and north Florida. Those portions are worth \$405,600.

The process was "highly questionable and raised concerns from the beginning," LaKeitha Grey, the CEO of Tallahassee-based N-Tersections Communications, told reporters on Friday.

Three other black-owned marketing firms and the Florida Black Chamber of Commerce are also included in the lawsuit. They are suing Gov. Charlie Crist, the Department of Management Services and the winner of the black portions of the contract, the Moore/Ketchum partnership.

The firms argue that one of the contract evaluators, Hue Reynolds, was biased and gave them drastically lower scores compared to the winning partnership. Reynolds is the deputy communications director at the Department of Education.

Taking Reynolds' scores out of the average would slightly lower the score for Moore/Ketchum and increase N-Tersections's score. But Moore/Ketchum's score would still be higher.

Crist spokesman Sterling Ivey said the governor's office is reviewing the legal merits of the suit and the available options.

In a letter to Sen. Gary Siplin, the chairman of the Legislative Black Caucus, Crist's general counsel said the contract was awarded through a fair bidding process.

"However, it is the Governor's hope that selected contractors will work with minority businesses to maximize the count of Floridians during the 2010 census," said General Counsel Robert Wheeler.

Siplin, a Democrat from Orlando, said the black caucus will withhold a final statement on the contract until formal bid protests are complete. But he said the black-owned firms are a natural choice for the contract, given their ties to the African-American community.

"Blacks know how to get the black community," he said. "We can explain to them that they ought to get counted."

Terrie Ard, a senior vice president with Moore Consulting Group, said the black-owned ESP Media will do 85 percent of the

work and receive that portion of the award. ESP produced all of the campaign's materials and is doing all of the grassroots outreach. Moore will coordinate the effort and report results back to Crist's office.

The lawsuit seeks to halt the census contract and re-open it. Census forms are due in a little over two weeks, April 1.

Grey acknowledged the suit comes late in the process, but said Crist's office delayed awarding the contracts three times. Those delays, she said, caused missed opportunities to reach out to black residents, such as Martin Luther King day and all of February, which is Black History Month.

Ron Sachs Communications won the portions of the contract for American Indians, Asian-Americans, Pacific Islanders and migrant farm workers. Sachs, a former communications director for Gov. Lawton Chiles, has formed one of the more well-known public relations firms in Tallahassee. His firm was hired as a consultant for Republican House Speaker-designate Dean Cannon, of Winter Park, to put on a jobs summit in January for Cannon and Senate President-designate Mike Haridopolos.

Besides the black categories, Moore/Ketchum will advertise to college students, part-time residents and those in rural areas.

Moore/Ketchum is a combination of Tallahassee's Moore Consulting and Ketchum is an international marketing firm based in New York City.

Moore has worked for the state Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Workforce Florida, and promoted legislation to fund the state's network of trauma centers.

The Florida Association of Broadcasters won the contract to reach out to the homeless and Salter-Mitchell was picked to reach-out to disabled residents. MGSCOMM, a Miami-based marketing firm won the bid to reach out to Hispanics.

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CNSNews.com

## IT Problems Put Accuracy of Census at Risk, Say Government Auditors

Monday, March 29, 2010

By Edwin Mora

**Washington D.C. (CNSNews.com)** – Information Technology (IT) problems at the U.S. Census Bureau could cause inaccuracies in this year's constitutionally mandated decennial tabulation of the U.S. population, according to government auditors.

"IT problems place the efficiency and accuracy of Non-Response Follow-Up at risk and final decennial costs remain uncertain," testified Judith Gordon, the principal assistant inspector general for Audit and Evaluation at the Department of Commerce, which runs the Census Bureau.

The NRFU is the census' largest operation and involves personally interviewing millions of people nationwide who did not respond to the mailed Census questionnaire.

Robert Goldenkoff, the director of strategic issues for the Government Accountability Office (GAO), told CNSNews.com that "an estimated 50 million housing units out of a mail-out universe of about 120 million" will be non-respondents that will require an in-person follow-up to count.

According to the Census Bureau: "As a part of the decennial census operations, the U.S. Census Bureau creates an address list of housing units in the United States, and mails out census forms to most of those housing units. People who do not mail back their census forms are visited by a census interviewer who comes to record their data during a personal interview. This visit is a part of the Non-Response Follow-Up (NRFU) operation."

Goldenkoff, Gordon, and Arnold Jackson, the associate director for the decennial count at the Census Bureau, testified at a March 25 hearing on the 2010 Census. The hearing was held by the subcommittee on the Census of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee.

The Census Bureau is specifically having problems with two IT systems. One is the Paper-Based Operational Control System (PBOC), which is a computer system used to manage the information collected during field operations such as NRFU.

The second is Decennial Applicant Personnel and Payroll System (DAPPS), which is the system used to keep track of, and pay, the more than 600,000 temporary federal workers who help conduct the Census's NRFU field operations.

Last Thursday, the Government Accountability Office released a report authored by Goldenkoff on the Census Bureau's IT problems entitle, "Data Collection is Under Way, But Reliability of Key Information Technology Systems Remains a Risk." The report indicated that the government has known about the problem for some time.

The report said that last February, the GAO had testified that "key IT systems -- most notably an automated system used to manage field data collection known as the Paper-Based Operations Control System (PBOCS) and a personnel and payroll processing system called the Decennial Applicant Personnel and Payroll System (DAPPS) -- were experiencing significant performance issues." The report documents Goldenkoff's testimony before the House subcommittee.

The Bureau has been in the process of hiring an estimated 600,000 people to conduct the NRFU operation from May through July 2010 -- the interviewers will be trained in April.

During the hearing, Goldenkoff warned that "little time is left" to correct the IT problems that affect NRFU.

The IT component used to "manage Non-Response Follow-Up, the largest Census field operation, is still being tested and it's scheduled to be released in mid-April," explained Goldenkoff.

"This is about three weeks later than planned and barely ahead of when the Non-Response Follow-Up is scheduled to begin in early May," he added. "As a result, little time will be left to resolve any problems identified during testing."

Nevertheless, the Census Bureau's Jackson was optimistic that the bureau would be successful in its count despite the highlighted IT problems.

"We feel that we are more than prepared to do a successful Non-Response Follow-Up at a range of response estimates on time and within the budget we have," testified Jackson.

The operating budget for NRFU is \$2.7 billion, according to Goldenkoff's written testimony.

As a result of the IT deficiencies, it is difficult to accurately provide a final cost for the 2010 Census, which is currently estimated at around \$14.7 billion.

Key information technology systems continue to experience performance functionality shortfalls and these systems can affect the ultimate scheduled cost and success of the Census," said Gordon.

Goldenkoff pointed out that not addressing the IT problems could result in the Census costing more than the ballpark \$14.7 billion figure.

"It certainly will affect cost if you want to be totally precise about it," Goldenkoff told CNSNews.com.

"If the automated processes aren't working properly, if there are shortcomings with that, then one work around is bringing more people to do the job manually and obviously more people, more staff time, and it could increase costs that way," he explained.

Gordon and Goldenkoff acknowledged that the Census is working towards resolving its IT problems.

"While our testimony today discusses serious IT system challenges, we are mindful of the extraordinary efforts being made by a very dedicated Census staff to achieve a successful outcome," said Gordon.

Americans are expected to use April 1, the National Census Day, as a reference point for mailing back their Census questionnaire.

Article 1, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution calls for a decennial enumeration of the American people to be used for allocating U.S. House seats among the states.

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sun-sentinel.com/news/palm-beach/fl-census-average-20100331,0,5562542.story

## South Florida Sun-Sentinel.com

### On Census Day, Florida's catching up

By Gregory Lewis, Sun Sentinel

6:24 PM EDT, March 31, 2010

Recently in last place, Florida is catching up with the rest of the nation at returning U.S. Census forms.

On the eve of Census Day, April 1, national officials were touting, "We're half-way there."

That's not quite the case in Florida, where 48 percent of households have mailed back their census information. But with the U.S. average hitting 50 percent, state and local census officials are not worried — yet.

"We expect a huge increase after April 1," said Pam Page Bellis, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Census Bureau in Florida, Alabama and Georgia. "The form says, who's living in your household April 1. So many people are waiting until then."

On Wednesday, Gov. Charlie Crist appeared in St. Petersburg to remind Floridians of the importance of the decennial survey, which determines how about \$435 billion is distributed to local, state and tribal governments.

The U.S. Census Bureau is tracking mail returns daily. Director Robert Groves expressed concern about the low numbers in parts of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. He cited Miami in particular, where only 38 percent of households had mailed in their forms as of Tuesday.

By Wednesday, Miami-Dade County was up to 41 percent, just behind Broward and Palm Beach counties at 43 percent each.

Last week Florida was at 9 percent, making it the worst state for returns. By Tuesday the state had climbed out of last place.

Once Broward census officials get numbers for areas that are responding way below the norm, they will mobilize to go door-to-door next week, said Rosalind Osgood, co-chair of a committee focusing on those areas.

Broward officials have a rally planned for Thursday at the Oakland Park Post Office.

"We'll have some local celebrities, some mayors and people who work on the complete count



committee," said Scott Medvin, committee coordinator. "We want to encourage people to send their forms back. April 1 is not the end of the census."

If you have not received a census form, call The Census 2010 Help Line at 1-866-872-6868.

Gregory Lewis can be reached at [glewis@SunSentinel.com](mailto:glewis@SunSentinel.com) or 954-572-2084.

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## **As new census begins, latest estimates show Lee population decline, Collier increase**

By ELYSA BATISTA

Monday, April 5, 2010

Just as the 2010 census got under way, the U.S. Census Bureau released population estimates from the past year that showed how the recession has affected growth in various parts of the nation.

For the year ending July 1, 2009, Collier's growth rate ticked up slightly though still nowhere near the huge gains from earlier in the decade. Lee County lost population for that time period in 2008-09, the first time that happened in the past decade.

During that year-long period, Lee County lost 0.3 percent of its population, going from 588,709 to 586,906 \_ or 1,801 people overall. The change also included a loss of 4,623 people in a category the census calls "domestic migration," which was offset by natural births and "international" immigration into the county.

Armando Nargi, president of the Lee County Chamber of Commerce, said he wasn't surprised by the numbers.

"Right now there's no growth and no stability in our economy in Lee County," Nargi said. "It changes month-to-month, day-to-day ... employment opportunities are severely limited."

Nargi added that in March, the chamber received several inquiries from people interested in moving to Lee County.

He said it could have been the severe winter up North, but it still was a higher uptick than the same time last year.

Meanwhile, Collier's population gained 1 percent in that time period between 2008 and 2009, going from 315,533 to 318,537 \_ an increase of 3,004 residents. The increase was a larger gain than the 2,070 residents Collier saw between 2007 and 2008, which was a 0.6 percent increase from 2007's 313,463 estimate.

Along with births and deaths, Collier's population change included a loss of 158 residents due to "domestic" migration, moving to another part of the state or nation, and an increase of 2,092 residents due to "international" migration.

According to Robert Bernstein, the estimates are based on 2000 census data and updated by using administrative records to estimate components of population change — namely births, deaths, and domestic and international migration.

The census then provides annual county and metro area estimates for the 2000 to 2009 period, as well as rankings by population size in 2009 and by numeric and percentage change from 2000 to 2009 and 2008 to 2009.

These are the last estimates to use 2000 Census results as a base. The estimates aren't from the 2010 population counts currently under way.

Bernstein said the first counts from the 2010 census will be the state population counts, which are slated for release by Dec. 31 just in time for reapportionment to begin \_ to determine how many congressional seats each state gets.

However, Bernstein said the 2010 county and metropolitan-area population counts won't be released until roughly March 2011, when the district boundary-drawing will begin.

"So they can redraw legislative boundaries for U.S. House seats and state legislative districts," Bernstein said.

The 2011 population estimates will be the first in a series of numbers released based on the 2010 Census population counts.

Whether Florida's population growth gets back on track will depend on the economy, said Scott Cody, of the Bureau of Economic Business Research at the University of Florida in Gainesville.

"The numbers will depend on when the housing market eases up and when the job market eases up," Cody said. "We're expecting if the economic situation gets better, that people will begin to come back to Florida."

\_\_ *Connect with Elysa Batista at [www.naplesnews.com/staff/elysa\\_batista](http://www.naplesnews.com/staff/elysa_batista)*



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## Count me in: Some Southwest Florida residents don't get census form. Now what?

By ELYSA BATISTA

Thursday, April 8, 2010

National Census Day came and went on April 1.

But in spite of all the nationwide "mail it back" efforts, Estero resident Marcella Dooney said it seemed like she was left out.

"I was surprised when I didn't get it," said Dooney, 68, referring to the 2010 Census survey.

Dooney isn't alone.

Across the country, millions of Census forms may not have made it to their intended destinations.

"There are various reasons that can explain why this occurred," said U.S. Census Bureau director Robert M. Groves in a written statement released Wednesday.

For some, he said it falls to the form being undeliverable.

"Some of the forms we provide to the United States Postal Service for delivery are returned by them as undeliverable. As of April 3, we had received 12.9 million of these from (the postal service)," Groves said. "Many of these are for vacant housing units, but some will be situations where we had an address error in our file, or the address we have is not actually used for mail delivery. We will visit each undeliverable address during our nonresponse follow-up operation (from May 1 to July 10) to collect census information in person or to determine the unit is vacant or non-residential."

In addition, Groves said, other issues that could have derailed a form's delivery include some forms getting delivered to the wrong address by either the post office or census workers conducting hand delivery, or that some units were completely missed during the bureau's canvassing in 2009.

Groves added that if residents believe they won't be counted, beginning Monday they can call 1-(866)-872-6868. Bureau staff either would take down the resident's information over the phone or send a form by mail.



In addition, residents can obtain a "be counted" form from Southwest Florida's 90 Be Counted or 83 Questionnaire Assistance Center sites from now through April 19, said Edwin E. Frost, manager for the census' Fort Myers office.

The centers can be found in public areas such as libraries and community centers donated by businesses and organizations.

Frost said the questionnaire assistance centers are staffed by trained volunteers and Census Bureau employees 15 hours a week.

Meanwhile, he said the "Be Counted" sites are just boxes where people can pick up the questionnaires.

Through the additional outreach, Frost said the census hopes that additional form mail-backs will be completed by May 1.

Increasing the mail-back rate is crucial, he said.

"We've mailed out 130 million questionnaires nationwide," said Frost, adding that two weeks after the initial mailing an extra 40 million forms went out.

The Census Bureau estimates that if every household completed and mailed back their census form, taxpayers could reduce the cost of taking the census by \$1.5 billion \_ mainly through not having to send out as many census workers out to do door-to-door canvassing.

In essence, Frost said, it can save you a knock at the door.

So that's what Dooney ended up doing.

A quick trip to Questionnaire Assistance Center at Lee County's South Regional Library, off Three Oaks Parkway, was all it took for her to get her missing form.

"As a matter of fact there was somebody outside of the library giving census forms," Dooney said, adding that the staff was helpful.

And as soon as she got home, Dooney said she filled it out and put it in the mail once she was done.

"I am counted," she said.

\* \* \* \* \*

If you haven't received a U.S. 2010 Census form, here is what you can do:

--Visit the 2010 Census Web site: [2010census.gov](http://2010census.gov) contains information about the 10-

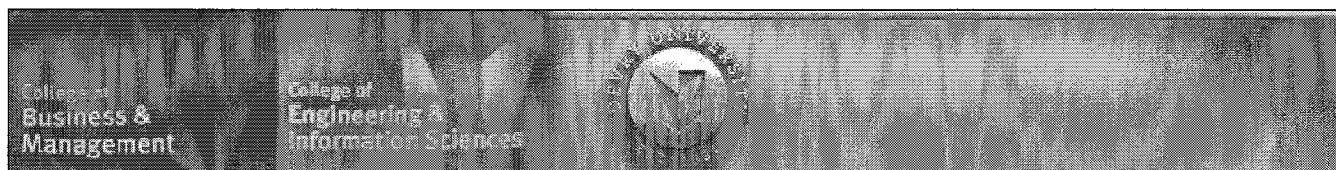
question census, including the uses and history of the questions. It also includes form-filling instructions in 59 languages other than English, as well as in-language instructional videos and updates on the latest census news.

--Visit one of the census' 30,000 questionnaire assistance centers or one of the 10,000 stand-alone (unstaffed) "Be Counted" sites: Hours and days of operation vary by site, but the information, along with addresses of both the closest assistance centers and "Be Counted" sites to you, can be found on an interactive map on the 2010 Census Web site <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/take10map/>.

-- Call the U.S. Census: For those who prefer to ask a person their census questions, assistance hot lines are available -- English 1-866-872-6868; Spanish 1-866-928-2010; Chinese 1-866-935-2010; Korean 1-866-955-2010; Russian 1-866-965-2010; Vietnamese 1-866-945-2010; and TDD (hearing impaired) 1-866-783-2010.



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April 11, 2010

## Lacking state funding, Census response rates lag

By JULIANA BARBASSA  
Associated Press Writer

State and local governments hammered by the recession have cut spending on outreach for the 2010 U.S. Census, leaving hard-to-reach neighborhoods with response rates that may fall behind the count a decade ago, officials said.

The funding cutbacks have come at all levels, and at a cost.

California, for example, dedicated \$24.7 million to the Census 2000 campaign. Although an undercount could cost the state billions in federal funding and a Congressional seat, this year's outreach budget is only \$2 million.

Two weeks into the count, the state's census form return rates are about 10 percent behind the 2000 total, officials said, adding that the numerical disparity would be worse without the efforts of philanthropic and community-based organizations.

"We need to make a push to make sure we at least stay even," said Louis Stewart, deputy director of California's census outreach. "There is a lot riding on this count."

More than \$435 billion a year is distributed by the federal government to states based on census-driven funding formulas. California could lose about \$3,000 a year for each resident not counted in the 2010 census.

The 2000 census found 33.9 million people in the state. It is estimated that the population will exceed 38 million in 2010.

Residents have until April 19 to mail back their census forms. After that, their answers will have to be collected by census workers going door to door at considerable expense.

Alameda County has one of the state's hardest to count populations because of its diversity, its pockets of poverty, and the language barriers faced by its varied immigrant groups. But this year, Stewart said, there is only \$50,000 for outreach there, compared with about \$250,000 in 2000.

Oakland went from hiring additional people for the census effort in 2000 to not having any money set aside at all for this year. City employees are taking on the task instead.

The city's response rate as of April 8 was 57 percent, compared with the 2000 total of 65 percent.

Local governments need every census-based federal dollar their residents are entitled to receive, Oakland city officials said at a Friday rally.

"Millions of dollars that would go elsewhere could go instead to Oakland," said city council member Ignacio de la Fuente, alternating English and Spanish. He asked residents to think of the future of their children, of the money that

could go to their schooling and health, and to fill in their census forms.

Cities and counties across the country have been forced to shed staff to keep their budgets in the black. But when it comes to allocating funding for census outreach, they should be thinking long-term, said Census spokesman Sonny Le.

"The census count is going to last for 10 years," he said. "So you're talking about shortsightedness."

The response rates haven't fallen even lower thanks, in part, to the work philanthropic foundations and community-based organizations have done in filling the outreach gap.

This census has seen unprecedented commitment on the part of the philanthropic community, which dedicated about \$15 million to promotion efforts, said Terri Ann Lowenthal, a former staff director of the House Census oversight subcommittee who also advised President Barack Obama's transition team on the census.

Much of the funding went to hard-to-count areas and the community organizations serving them.

"It's making a huge difference," Lowenthal said, adding that some areas deemed hard-to-count by the Census Bureau have seen response rates exceed expectation and exceed the national average because of this collaboration.

Census spokesman Le said that in the San Francisco Bay Area alone, institutions such as the San Francisco Foundation and the Silicon Valley Community Foundation have dedicated about \$500,000 to the effort.

The impact of the work done by community-based organizations is clear. An analysis of return rates shows that in Oakland, for example, significant differences in participation exist in side-by-side census tracts.

One of the tracts, a four-by-seven-block area near downtown that includes Chinatown, has the traits of a designated hard-to-count area: a large immigrant population, where more than 70 percent of the households aren't fluent in English, and more than half of adults have no high school degree.

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Yet the tract's response rate as of April 6 was 72 percent — well above the national average of 65 percent, and above the 2000 Census participation rate, according to an interactive map prepared by the City University of New York's Center for Urban Research.

A few blocks away, across a freeway, the ethnic makeup changes, the map shows. The residents are mostly white and Hispanic — and the response rate is 41 percent.

This difference is due, in part, to the very active role of Chinatown community organizations, local leaders said.

The Chinatown Chamber of Commerce, for example, put a \$2,900 grant to use and starting last year, made the census effort a part of street festivals, pancake breakfasts, youth programs, and even the landscape of Oakland's Chinatown with a large banner stretched out in a busy intersection.

That continued presence made for lots of opportunities to answer questions, and "eased the worries of the Chinese community, in their language," said Jennie Ong, executive director of the Oakland Chinatown Chamber of Commerce.

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On the Net:

Community participation rates in the 2010 census: <http://www.censushardtocountmaps.org/>



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Printed on page B1

## Census Politics Already At Work

By [Bill Rufty](#)

Published: Sunday, April 11, 2010 at 11:12 p.m.

U.S. Census Bureau officials and local governments are still trying to get a good count and strong response to the 2010 decennial census, but state lawmakers already are planning what to do with those results when they are tallied and reported a year from now.

Local governments naturally are more concerned with how many people they have and whether they are all counted so the federal money they get will not be cut.

State legislatures are concerned with another aspect, the one spelled out in the U.S. Constitution, in which the accurate count of people is necessary to reapportion congressional and legislative districts.

The Florida Legislature already has held preliminary meetings and workshops.

When the census count is done, Florida expects to add at least one congressional district to the 25 it already has because of the increase in population since the last decennial census in 2000.

Florida now has the fourth-largest delegation in the U.S. House of Representatives and is predicted to have the third-largest within the next 10 years. California currently has 53 members of the U.S. House, Texas has 32, and New York, which the Sunshine State is rapidly closing in on, has 29.

Because the total number of members in the U.S. House of Representatives stays the same, that means somewhere in the nation, another state will lose a congressional seat if Florida gains one.

Actually, several northern states are concerned they could lose more than one seat, including New York.

One thing that will remain constant in Florida is the 120 members of the state House of Representatives and the 40 members in the Senate, which means that if the population has increases, the boundaries of their districts will change.

Currently, three U.S. congressional districts have portions of Polk County and three state Senate districts are represented here.

Polk officials would like to see the county included in a single congressional district again as it was for many years.

They also want to make sure two state Senate districts continue to be anchored in the county, meaning that Polk voters continue to have control over who is elected in those two districts.

The states should find out how many people live within their boundaries and thus how many congressional districts they will have by December.

They won't know exactly where those people live within their states for legislative district boundaries until early 2011. New districts must be in place by the 2012



elections.

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It goes without saying, the party that controls the Florida House and Florida Senate will control how the new districts are drawn and can draw them in such a manner that the party can increase its chances of holding on to the number of seats it controls or even gaining seats.

Democrats have not been in control of the two chambers for 14 years in the House and since 1992 in the Senate. They don't appear to be able to take back either chamber in this November's elections.

It will be the legislators elected this year who will vote on the shape of the congressional and legislative districts for the next 10 years.

During a January interview, state Rep. Franklin Sands, D-Weston, the Democratic leader in the House, told The Ledger that his party would concentrate on trying to gain six or seven seats this fall.

With 76 Republicans and 44 Democrats currently in the Florida House, it seems unlikely the Democratic Party will have much of an effect on redistricting next year.

In the Florida Senate, there currently are 26 Republicans and 14 Democrats.

There is a constitutional amendment proposed by Fair Districts Florida that will be on the ballot and if it passes, it would require the Legislature to draw districts without "favor or disfavor to an incumbent or political party."

It further states "Districts shall not be drawn to deny racial or language minorities the equal opportunity to participate in the political process ... Districts must be contiguous. Unless otherwise required, districts must be compact."

Rep. Seth McKeel, R-Lakeland, who has been in the early redistricting workshops, said the amendment is vague and would be difficult to follow, if passed.

"They (officials of Fair Amednments.Com) haven't been able to tell us how would you draw districts to comply with their language and yet comply with the Voting Rights Act and the many other layers of legal fairness as well," he said.

Following the amendment to the letter, McKeel argued, likely could eliminate some minority-access districts in Congress, which now are not compact in order to allow minority candidates a chance to be elected.

McKeel said of greater concern in elections is not how districts are drawn, but the decision last year by a 1st Judicial Circuit judge to strike down Florida's laws regulating election communications organizations.

The judge agreed with plaintiffs' arguments that the laws limited their right to exercise free speech.

The ruling, which the state of Florida decided not to appeal, leaves the independent organizations unregulated as to who donors are and regulations on raising and spending money that are applied to registered political committees.

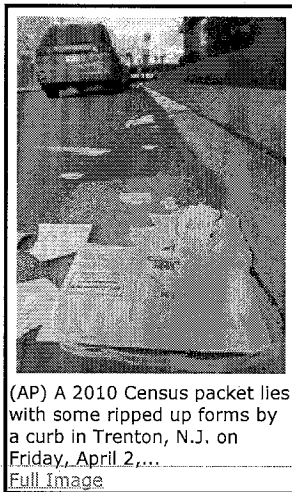
This story appeared in print on page B1

WASHINGTON (AP) - As the U.S. census nears its final stages, the government is preparing for possible debacles that could derail its \$15 billion head count, from mass identity theft and lawsuits to homeowners who refuse to answer their doors.

Census Bureau documents, obtained by The Associated Press, underscore the highly fragile nature of the high-stakes population count before the government dispatches some 700,000 temporary workers to visit homes, beginning in May.

The preparedness efforts are not entirely new. Previous censuses had contingency plans in place, at least conceptually, and the Census Bureau has never failed to meet its constitutional mandate of delivering population counts by Dec. 31 each decennial year.

But this is the first time the Census has detailed - in 300 pages of internal documents released under the Freedom of Information Act - specific risks to the once-a-decade government count. It's part of the bureau's approach to handling threats that could undermine accuracy, omit large segments of the public or add to already ballooning costs.



(AP) A 2010 Census packet lies with some ripped up forms by a curb in Trenton, N.J. on Friday, April 2,....  
[Full Image](#)

Many of the documents proved telling, however. Some were redacted or withheld for security reasons.

"Considering the volume of data that the Bureau of Census gathers during the census, some loss of critical information is bound to occur," one document bluntly states. Another document, dated April 2, 2006, details a rapid-response effort that includes notification of authorities, if appropriate, as well as free credit monitoring for potential identity theft victims.

One document says the "No. 1 concern" could be a refusal by immigrants to participate.

Placing a cap on costs if immigrants try to evade the count, the response plan notes that a census worker will attempt to visit a home six times at most - or fewer, if a resident makes clear he won't cooperate - before the worker questions neighbors to get

the information. If that fails, the Census Bureau will statistically impute data based on characteristics of neighboring households.

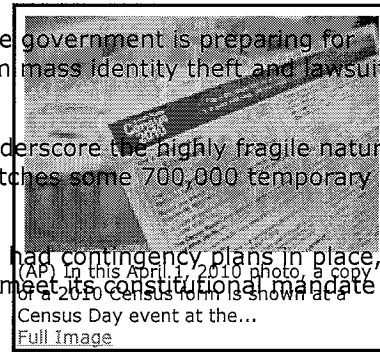
In 2000, imputation, a statistical method that was not part of previous court battles over statistical sampling, increased the U.S. population by 1.1 million, particularly among urban racial minorities who would have been missed by a head count. Census Bureau director Robert Groves has ruled out sampling but not other statistical methods.

Another risk being monitored by the Census Bureau is the possibility of a conservative boycott following recent rhetoric, including one blogger's threat to pull out a shotgun to scare away census workers. The White House condemned the remarks Tuesday, and the bureau said it remains on the lookout for signs of a boycott or other trouble. Conservatives who refuse to participate may also be counted by way of neighbor questioning or statistical imputation.

"With these things, anything can turn on a dime, implode and impact our ability to recruit staff and gain cooperation," Arnold Jackson, the bureau's associate director for the decennial census, said in an interview. "We also remain terribly concerned about safety."

He said the bureau has tightened security procedures and boosted targeted advertising to specific groups, including a public service announcement released this week featuring President George W. Bush's former political adviser, Karl Rove. Still, while there have been anecdotal reports that conservatives may fill out only the number of people in their households, Jackson says there has been little sign of incomplete census forms received so far.

Jackson said the Census Bureau will tap into its reserve fund of roughly \$7 million for ad buys in low-response regions, which he identified as having predominantly "non-English speaking households, areas of heavy concentration of minority groups, such as African-American and Latino, and urbanized areas."



(AP) In this April 1, 2010 photo, a copy of a 2010 census packet is shown at a Census Day event at the...  
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Technology. Call or contact  
www.Dell.com/Business

At the Bureau of Census -  
Federal Video Journals  
Award Checking The Website, Call  
Census Offices  
www.theCIVICPartner.com

Currently, the mail participation rate for the 2010 census is 63 percent, and officials remain cautiously optimistic they will be able to match, if not top, the 2000 mail-back rate of 72 percent by the time the Census Bureau winds down its mail-in operation in late April. From May to July, census takers are sent to homes that do not mail back forms.

Other potential risks include:

Information technology breakdowns. A key software system used to schedule, deploy and pay census takers is full of defects, and its ability to handle a massive payroll of more than 600,000 temporary employees who begin work in May remains in doubt. Robert Goldenkoff, a director at the Government Accountability Office, believes the census could face serious delays if IT problems aren't fixed soon; the Census Bureau says it's dealing with the problem.

Lawsuits. Census officials are calling it "relatively certain" that they will be sued by at least one state that just misses gaining an additional U.S. House seat. The state will probably move quickly "in order to potentially reverse the December 2010 announcement" of the official head count figures, according to documents. Officials said litigation could involve outreach to non-English speaking communities or census methodology, such as the count of prisoners, non-citizens or religious missionaries overseas.

Mass retirements. A significant number of Census Bureau employees are now eligible to retire, and the 2010 count could be in peril if there is a mass exodus during peak census periods. So far, however, there has been no sign of that, according to documents. In the meantime, the bureau is developing detailed plans to make the learning curve shorter for newly hired employees.

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On the Net:

2010 census: <http://www.2010census.gov>

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**Work Injury Lawyer- Fed** - Alan Shapiro, Attorney at Law practicing Federal Workers' Comp  
[www.injuredfederalworker.com](http://www.injuredfederalworker.com)

**Headcount Management** - Employer-of-Record Payroll Funding Back Office for Temp-Contract Staff  
[HeadcountMgmt.com](http://HeadcountMgmt.com)

**UK Census Online** - 1841 to 1901 census. Fast and easy to use with detailed information.  
[www.UKcensusOnline.com](http://www.UKcensusOnline.com)

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## Florida House Debuts Census Site

By *Kevin Derby*

Created 04/15/2010 - 10:48am

The House Select Policy Council on Strategic & Economic Planning met Thursday to tackle redistricting at both the congressional and state levels. It also released its "[My Florida Census](#)" site, which will help the federal government count as many residents of the state as possible.

"We found 18 streets in Osceola County that the census did not account for," said Rep. Dean Cannon, R-Winter Park. "The areas of concern are areas of new construction."

Cannon said the state estimates at least 98,000 Floridians are in danger of being missed by the census.

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## Census: Minority areas, cities lagging in response

By HOPE YEN (AP) — 3 days ago

WASHINGTON — With five days left for people to return their census forms, Census Bureau director Robert Groves on Monday urged those in big cities and border regions to step up the response to avoid visits by census takers next month.

So far, about 65 percent, or more than 77 million households, have completed and mailed back the 10-question forms. The Midwest leads the pack, while the southern and western U.S. and big cities such as New York, Chicago and Philadelphia are lagging.

At a news conference, Groves said most of the lagging areas are either rural or have dense populations, or have more minority and non-English speaking people. That was also the case in 2000.

While there have been anecdotal reports of conservatives boycotting or only partially filling out the form, Groves said there is no evidence of that.

"Things are going quite well," he said, referring to overall mail response, which remains on track to match or surpass the 2000 mail-back rate of 72 percent.

"But the clock is ticking. We would love to avoid sending census takers to large numbers of households around the country," Groves said.

The Census Bureau is asking people to mail their forms by Friday as it prepares to send more than 600,000 census takers to homes beginning May 1. Homes that have not yet received census forms can call 1-866-872-6868 between 8 a.m. and 9 p.m. to submit information by phone or find out where to pick up a form at more than 40,000 help centers around the country.

The Census Bureau has estimated it would save \$1.5 billion in follow-up visits if everyone who received a census form mailed it back. The population count, conducted every 10 years, is used to distribute U.S. House seats and more than \$400 billion in federal aid.

The highest participation rates are in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Michigan and Nebraska, where return rates range between 71-76 percent. North Carolina and South Carolina, which have participation of 67 percent and 66 percent, have topped their mail-back rate from 2000.

Alaska ranks at the bottom in participation, with 54 percent of households returning their forms. It's followed by New Mexico, Louisiana, West Virginia, New York, Hawaii, Mississippi and Oklahoma, each with rates of less than 60 percent.

### On-the-Net:

- 2010 census: <http://www.2010census.gov>
- Local participation rates: <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/take10map/>

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## House Panel Takes Up Redistricting

Kevin Derby

Posted: April 16, 2010 12:37 AM

With Floridians due to vote on two redistricting amendments in November, a House panel met Thursday to tackle the issue at both the congressional and state levels by pushing another amendment.

The amendments already on the ballot, sponsored by Fair Districts Florida, would change how the Legislature will draw up congressional and legislative seats. They prohibit the Legislature from creating districts to benefit or hinder an incumbent or a political party and require the districts to be compact.

Rep. Dorothy Hukill, R-Port Orange, introduced a separate amendment to the state constitution in the House Select Policy Council on Strategic & Economic Planning. The amendment asks the Legislature to follow federal guidelines when creating districts, and she said it clarifies the Fair Districts Florida ones and is not in opposition to them.

"There is a certain confusion about amendments already on the ballot," said Hukill. "This measure will add clarity to the amendment."

Rep. Perry Thurston, D-Plantation, led Democratic questioning of Hukill, specifically demanding how Fair Districts Florida's amendments were confusing.

Hukill said that Fair Districts Florida's amendments were confusing on minority-access districts, questions about compactness and prioritization.

Thurston pressed Hukill on the issue, asking numerous times how the bill clarified the amendments Floridians will be voting on.

"It will protect racial and language minorities who take part in the political process," said Hukill. She said that she did not know if her legislation would mean there would be a change in the number of legislative seats held by minorities.

Representatives from organized labor and the League of Women Voters testified against Hukill's proposed amendment.

Drawing on his experience as one of the drafters of the Sunshine Amendment backed by Reubin Askew and experienced in redistricting since the 1970s, John French from Associated Industries of Florida said that the Fair Districts measures created confusion and said he backed Hukill's legislation.

"As Amendments 5 and 6 are currently created, we're headed into court," said Rep. Paige Kreegel, R-Punta Gorda, echoing comments made by incoming Senate President Mike Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island.

Hukill's proposed amendment passed the council by a 11-5 party-lines vote and is now headed to the House floor.

The council unanimously passed a measure starting the 2012 legislative session in January as opposed to the usual March start in order to tackle redistricting.

The council also released its "My Florida Census" site, which will help the federal government count as many residents of the state as possible. The site can be found at [www.myfloridacensus.gov](http://www.myfloridacensus.gov).

"We found 18 streets in Osceola County that the census did not account for," said Rep. Dean Cannon, R-Winter Park. "The areas of concern are areas of new construction."

Cannon said the state estimates at least 98,000 Floridians are in danger of being missed by the census.

Reach Kevin Derby at [kderby@sunshinestatenews.com](mailto:kderby@sunshinestatenews.com) or (850) 727-0859.

Corrine Brown Dean Cannon Dorothy Hukill Fair Districts Florida John French Keith Fitzgerald Mario Diaz-Ballard News Paige Kreegel Perry Thurston

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Posted on Sat, Apr. 17, 2010

## Two black lawmakers support GOP-led reapportionment amendment

BY MARC CAPUTO  
Herald/Times Tallahassee Bureau

Despite the NAACP's opposition, two top black lawmakers supported a Republican-led constitutional amendment Friday that was drafted in response to two liberal-leaning amendments that would check the Legislature's power as it draws political boundaries.

Sen. Gary Siplin, the black caucus leader, and Sen. Al Lawson, Senate Democratic leader, said they felt the new constitutional amendment protected minority voting rights.

The amendments are all surfacing this year because, in 2012, the Legislature will begin the once-a-decade process of redrawing political legislative and congressional districts to ensure each has an equal population. The amendments would need to be approved by 60 percent of voters.

Siplin said he was concerned that two other constitutional amendments pushed by the group Fair Districts Florida could endanger seats held by black lawmakers in Congress and the Legislature. So he helped write the new proposed amendment to add language concerning "communities of interest" and minorities to the Constitution.

"I just want to make sure there's language that protects us, people who look like me," Siplin said. He co-sponsored the amendment with future Senate President Mike Haridopolos, who chairs the Reapportionment Committee where the proposal passed 9-3, with Democrats opposed.

Ellen Freidin, Fair Districts chairwoman, said Haridopolos is leading a campaign of misinformation to confuse voters over the two Fair Districts amendments. One concerns congressional seats and affects the Legislature. The NAACP, which has backed the Fair Districts amendments, called the new Republican proposal supported by Siplin and Lawson "a sham" in a letter sent Wednesday to Haridopolos and his House counterpart, Dean Cannon.

Freidin pointed to language in the Fair Districts amendments that specifically protects minority voters. The amendments say political districts "shall not be drawn with the intent or result of denying or abridging the equal opportunity of racial or language minorities to participate in the political process or to diminish their ability to elect representatives of their choice."

The amendment offered by Siplin and Haridopolos says lawmakers shall only "take into consideration" minority issues. And that, Freidin says, weakens her group's amendments.

“It's a power grab,” she said.

The support of Siplin and Lawson was a coup for Haridopolos and the Republican leadership, who have sought to weaken Fair Districts for years. Fair Districts drafted the amendments to prevent the Legislature -- controlled by the GOP -- from favoring a political party or an incumbent when lawmakers redraw the boundaries of congressional and legislative seats.

Known as “redistricting” and “reapportionment,” the process occurs every 10 years after the Census. During redistricting, the majority party tries to strengthen its hand and the minority party inevitably sues.

Two decades ago, when Lawson was first serving, black Democrats who felt they were left out by their party aligned themselves with Republicans, helping to precipitate the GOP takeover of the Legislature.

Haridopolos said months of testimony and examination show that the Fair Districts amendments are unworkable and a recipe for a court fight.

He also pointed out that no one from Fair Districts -- a group member has only testified once in his committee -- spoke Friday.

*Marc Caputo can be reached at [mcaputo@Mia miHerald.com](mailto:mcaputo@Mia miHerald.com)*

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## Census participation rates are the lowest on college campuses

### Rates were the lowest around Tallahassee Community College

By Kourtney Berry

Staff Writer

Despite weeks of outreach, statistics show low census participation rates in areas where students live.

According to the Tallahassee 2010 Census Participation Rates Map, as of April 17, residents around Tallahassee Community College have the lowest rate of participation at 42 percent. Areas along Tennessee and Pensacola streets also show participates rates.

Professor Juanita Gaston, director of the Florida A&M Census Information Center, said students still do not understand the importance of filling out a census form.

"Students are busy. They leave forms on the coffee table, or even throw them away, not knowing the importance," Gaston said. "Federal programs are funded because of the head count, including Pell Grants, food stamps and even child care."

Rontel Batie, 21, a third-year political science student, filled out his census and mailed it back.

"I think it's positive," said the St. Augustine native. "Our race is already underrepresented when it comes to government funding and policies that are enforced." The map shows that residents from the areas near FAMU have a slightly better return rate.

The participation rate for residents near Gaines and Gamble streets, crossing Lake Bradford Road, was 45 percent as of April 17. However, these figures do not include the students living on campus. Those students will be counted in another process called the Group-Quarter Enumeration, according to Gaston.

"The resident directors will distribute and collect these forms from the students April 22 and 23," she said.

Tallahassee's overall participation rate is 64 percent, which is slightly less than the state's rate of 68 percent and the national rate of 69 percent. Residents still have a little more time to mail back

forms.

After May 1, census takers will knock on doors to urge people to mail them back. If students have not filled them out yet or have made some mistakes on them, representatives are there to help. Nerline Jean-Jacques, a third-year student from North Miami Beach, said she tried to fill out her form.

"I intended to mail mine back, but I messed up on the form and desperately need a new one," Jean-Jacques said. Coleman Library is hosting a "Be Counted Site" and has a questionnaire assistance table to help students like Jean-Jacques, who have either lost their forms or made a mistake when completing one.

Gaston and the census ambassadors recently made one last attempt to inform the community. They walked the area of the Bond neighborhoods with horns and flags on Saturday. Gaston said she wants students to know that even if they have not filled out their forms, they still have time to get them in the mailbox right away.

Those interested in working for the census can sign up for jobs this week. Students can call 850-205-6220 to register to take the census test or call Professor Gaston at 850-412-7545.

The testing date is Thursday, from noon to 2 p.m. in the North Wing of the School of Business and Industry, room 115.

Students will need to bring two forms of identification, which can be a valid driver's license, Rattler card, birth certificate and passport or social security card.

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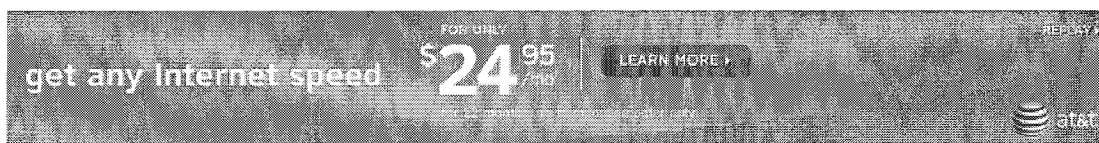
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5/24/10

## High Noon For Charlie (FL-Sen)

by Tally

Tue Apr 20, 2010 at 07:33:21 AM PDT



I'm always interested in metaphors or pop culture references used as framing devices for political campaigns. Recently I've been thinking about what would be the best way for Gov. Crist to package himself in his race for the US Senate, **especially now that he has started his move to run as an independent.**

CROSS POSTED FROM FLAPOLITICS.COM

Tally's diary :: ::

After the experience of **vetomania** (his rejection of the highly unpopular education reform bill known as SB6), the vision that came to mind was the iconic image of the lone gunslinger who rides into town, kills the bad guys, and saves the day for the townspeople. Movies like **Shane**, **High Plains Drifter**, and the Gary Cooper-Grace Kelly classic **High Noon**.

That's the one where no one in the town will help their marshal (played by Cooper) face off against the gunslingers who want revenge. The marshal doesn't run, but takes on and beats the gang by himself (and the help of his peace-loving Quaker wife's shotgun abilities--predating Linda Hamilton's Terminator 2 performance by decades).

When it's over, Cooper, exhausted and filthy from the battle, takes off his marshal's badge and throws it on the ground in contempt.

Don't you know the attention loving Crist would LOVE to play that role in real life, just like Woody Allen's character getting to repeat Bogart's famous words from **Casablanca** at the end of **Play It Again Sam**.

Much of the coverage of the political ramifications of Crist's veto have been along this line. **For example:**

But his comments at a Tallahassee rally Thursday following his veto may have revealed his intentions—and perhaps marked the unofficial launch of his independent bid for the Senate.

"It is the voice of the people that was heard this week, and that's what's so important in this country," Crist said before a group of teachers, students and a pep band outside a high school. "The most important thing is to do things right for the right reasons. Vetoing this legislation today was about trying to do what's right. I don't always get it right. But hell, I'm always going to try to do what's right."

Or this:

In vetoing the bill, Crist stood up to the Republican establishment, starting with the man who is no longer governor but who is still trying to run things, Jeb Bush.

Bush has been trying to destroy teacher unions for years.

But Bush and his buddies, such as Thrasher, the Florida Chamber of Commerce and various business groups, badly missed the point on this one.

The outrage at Thrasher's bill and the way it was handled didn't come from just teacher unions and Democrats. Many Republicans were angry, too.

And Crist heard from thousands of people from across the political spectrum urging a veto. He listened to the people instead of the power structure, and that's going to earn him

support.

Steve Schale (who ran Obama's campaign in Florida) has pointed out **the monetary difficulties** that Crist would face as an independent.

**The St. Pete Times** reported that if Crist does make the switch the law does not require him to return donations, even if contributors ask for them back.

Of course, the issue would then be, could he still raise new money.

It's possible that he doesn't care. **A National Review Article** speculates that there are probably a lot of good options for Gov. Crist in a post-politics life.

If that's so, the main advantage of switching would seem to be that he would retain everyone's attention until November, rather than August.

However, I think there is a weird, but plausible, almost Zen-like approach that Crist could take in a race as an independent and really accomplish something.

Due to the lack of big money contributors, Crist would campaign by not directly campaigning. When you think about it, that's exactly what he did with the SB6 veto.

As I mentioned in **Shakespeare Charlie**, one key to this approach would be to call a special session to deal with campaign finance reform. This would provide Gov. Crist with ENORMOUS attention and allow him to continue to take the moral high ground against the Republican legislative leadership.

But, another issue has recently arisen which has additional campaign potential.

That's the **"poison pill" redistricting amendment proposal** cooked up by Sen. Mike **"I Drive the Tank"** Haridopolis that would essentially nullify the redistricting reform constitutional amendment proposals put on the ballot by Fair Districts Florida.

Gov. Crist could make a show of meeting with popular experts like Leon County Supervisor of Elections Ion Sancho and adopt the powerful language Sancho uses in discussing redistricting. ("Quit calling it gerrymandering, it's rigging elections!")

Gov. Crist could point out that Republicans like California Gov. Swarzenegger and NY Mayor Bloomberg both favor redistricting reform. He could point out the hypocrisy of his predecessor Jeb Bush campaigning for reform in California but dismissing it here in Florida.

That would be sweet.

And here's the kicker. I'm sure Ellen Freidin, Campaign Chair of Fair Districts Florida, would be quite willing to help raise money to have him fly around the state delivering this message.

The beauty of this two pronged, non-partisan, good government approach is how well it fits into the mythic structure he has begun to create with the SB6 veto. Look at all of these quotes:

**On Saturday**, Crist said if he was playing politics, he would have signed the bill. But he broke with the party, arguing the process was just not right.

He used the word "hypocrisy" in describing how the GOP accused the Democratic Party at the federal level for using partisan politics to push a health care bill - before the Republicans in the state legislature strong-armed for votes in the teacher-pay bill.

"We got calls in our office that not only were arms being twisted, they were being broken to get people to vote for this thing," Crist said.

The Crist campaign has seen a surge in support in the aftermath of the veto. Campaign officials said 725 requests for everything from bumper stickers to volunteer jobs have come in since Thursday afternoon. That's a far cry from the couple dozen or so campaign workers we're used to responding to every couple of days.

**"I didn't get elected the governor of just the Republicans of Florida. I got elected the governor of the people of Florida," Crist said.**(emphasis added)

**Crist added:** "I want to be very thoughtful in this. This is a decision that has to be made by (April) 30th, and I want to do what's right for the people of our state."

**Everyone is begging** Crist to stay put -- except for the recently deposed chairman of the state party, Jim Greer.

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He said: "Charlie Crist has always put the people first before partisan politics and that has always upset those who put partisan politics before the people. If putting the people first once again requires him to run as an independent he should do it!"

Even if he lost the Senate race he would do it in a way that greatly enhanced his stature of Florida. He would enter into the realm of "statesman" like former governors Bob Graham and Jeb Bush. Askew.

If he stayed in Florida he could become our "Democracy Czar", being a public spokesman for average citizens navigate the minefield of constitution amendment proposals.

He might actually really become a true people's champion. And if he took this route I would count him out of winning the US Senate race.

Hey, I can hear the strains of that classic song cuing up . . .



Okay, that was fun, but I need to make clear that I'm a LONG time supporter of Kendrick Meek. (My first post on him goes back to 2008!) I have written that Rep. Meek can win a three way race by getting out his base, which he is poised to do.

So why encourage Gov. Crist to run as an independent? Here's why:

Former state party chairman Al Cardenas said **Crist could do long-term damage to the GOP if he bowed out of the Aug. 24 primary and ran as an independent in November.** The switch would create a potentially competitive three-way race between Rubio, Crist and the likely Democratic nominee, U.S. Rep. Kendrick Meek of Miami.

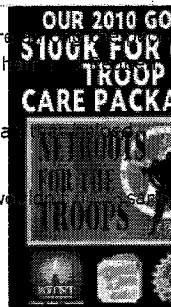
With Democrats ahead by 700,000-plus voters in Florida, Republican candidates rely on independent voters for statewide success, Cardenas said. A well-known independent candidate, he said, could hurt the GOP's outreach to nonpartisan voters and the Hispanic electorate. (emphasis added)

I also believe that the best way for redistricting reform to pass on the November ballot is if it has a popular state-wide spokesperson.

So, if you would like to help do long-term damage to the GOP in Florida and help promote good government initiatives, please **contact Gov. Crist** and urge him to run as an independent and take up campaign finance reform and redistricting reform as his main issues.

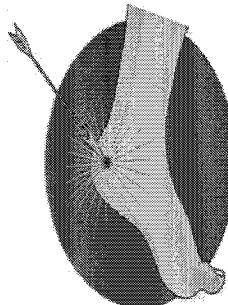
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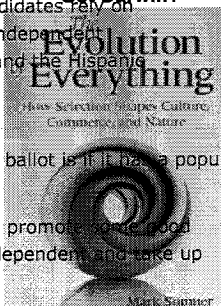


The conservative movement is not invincible. It has an Achilles Heel.

Once the world learns about their power is derived from convincing millions that the Bible says what they claim it does. Their Achilles Heel? The Koine papyri discovered in Egypt.

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## **Irvington files suit against Census bureau**

**By Richard Khavkine/For The Star-Ledger**

April 20, 2010, 5:10AM

**IRVINGTON** -- Residents in an apartment complex of more than 1,700 households did not receive their Census forms, and township officials, fearing the loss of millions of federal dollars, have sued the Census Bureau alleging a breach of its constitutional mandate.

The lawsuit, filed Monday in U.S. District Court, seeks a court order compelling the agency to send a team of workers to the Maple Gardens apartments, a four-tower complex near Springfield and Maple avenues that is home to about 5,000 people.

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### **More Irvington news:**

According to recent estimates, the gated community's residents could comprise as much as 9 percent of the township's entire population.

"I'm very concerned," Mayor Wayne Smith said Monday. "That is a glaring omission." Although its ostensible purpose is to count the population, the Census also helps policy makers determine how to disburse \$400 billion in federal funding each year.

"Dollars tend to be commensurate with your population," Smith said, alluding to federal funds that help pay for facilities and services, such as road construction projects, job training centers and schools.

According to the latest American Community Survey, which tracks demographic trends between Censuses, Irvington's population dipped to about 56,000 in 2008, a 60-year low. The township, hit hard by foreclosures, had a population of 60,695 a decade ago, according to the 2000 Census.

"Who knows what they missed in the rest of the township?" said township attorney, Marvin T. Braker, adding, "You can't exclude that many people. It's just fundamentally unfair."

The suit also seeks an extension of the April 16 deadline to mail in the forms.

A Census spokeswoman said the agency has contingency plans to help it account for large swaths of populations that might have been missed, such as that cited by the township. One possible solution would be to set up a Census station in the buildings' lobbies.

"One way we try to cover all bases would be to set up a table in the lobby," said Yolanda Finley, who had not seen the suit and could not comment on the township's allegation that no forms were mailed to the complex. "There are all kinds of arrangements made to count in a building that size."

Smith, though, said he was skeptical.

"I'm not assured that what they're going to do is going to be enough," he said. "Whatever they need to do, they need to do more, because they made the mistake."

According to the Census Bureau, it costs 42 cents to obtain a mailed-back Census form. Getting a household's responses in person if residents have not mailed back the form costs upward of \$57.

The township's Census response rate is currently 44 percent, below the nation's 69 percent rate, according to the bureau's most recent figures.

Finley said that residents who had not received Census forms could call (866) 877-6868 to have one mailed.

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# Florida Census Website Aims to Catch the Uncounted

*Apr 23, 2010, By Karen Wilkinson, Staff Writer*

Looking to better engage the public in Florida's upcoming redistricting process, a recently launched website is aiming to tally those not counted by the U.S. Census and could give officials a road map to create an online redistricting platform.

The site, [www.myfloridacensus.gov](http://www.myfloridacensus.gov), went live April 12 and incorporates Microsoft's Azure cloud storage, Silverlight and Bing maps, to create a comprehensive, interactive platform for Floridians to communicate whether they were counted by the Census.

"The biggest result of the website will be more people counted in Florida, and because of that, maybe a congressional seat and more electoral votes for Florida as well as additional federal funding," J. Alex Kelly, chief analyst of the Florida House of Representatives Select Policy Council on Strategic and Economic Planning wrote in an e-mail to Government Technology. "This program is the base for a future Web-based redistricting program."

During the last redistricting process -- which is done every 10 years and after states receive official Census results -- the Florida Legislature used desktop software to open the process to citizens, allowing them to submit suggested district maps for the State House, State Senate and Congressional maps, Kelly said. But because citizens who wanted to participate in the redistricting process had to pay \$20 a pop for the software, it wasn't quite accessible to everyone because of the cost.

"Practically speaking, we think an online tool will be more likely to increase meaningful and diverse citizen participation than did the desktop software," Kelly wrote. "For the redistricting effort, the Silverlight, Bing maps [and] Azure cloud mash-up gives a unique platform to allow everyone in Florida that is interested in the redistricting process to take part in that process in real time."

The idea came from Florida Rep. Dean Cannon, who wanted a redistricting tool that would open up the process for every Floridian, Kelly said. "He felt a tool was needed to facilitate the viewing of the maps and to solicit real-time public comment," he wrote. In planning such a tool, state officials wanted to test the technology early in the development process, Kelly said.

"At the same time, we became aware that the Census may not count areas where there were new subdivisions, apartments, condos and dorms," he said. "The [myfloridacensus.gov](http://www.myfloridacensus.gov) website was the perfect opportunity to test the technology and to help with the effort to make sure every Floridian was counted."

The site's basic question -- did the Census count you? -- garnered more than 1,800 individual responses in eight days, Kelly said, of which 287 noted they weren't counted. But there are an estimated 98,000 Floridians in danger of being missed by the Census, Cannon told the Sunshine State News.

That said, the experience using such technologies will better prep the state to host data in the cloud and

run the website on any browser. "We gain the experience of hosting 15 GB of data on the Azure cloud website," Kelly wrote. "We will work to build into our system the automatic increase and decrease of resources to handle the different user loads."

And by using Silverlight, the state has secure storage capabilities that will allow it to develop the redistricting solution and have the website run on any browser, Kelly said.

"We plan to use this secure private storage to keep the definition of the user's district plans. This way the user will be the only one with access to their plan until they choose to make their plans public," Kelly wrote.

The Bing maps program also gives the state a "rich environment of maps, aerials, geo-coding and geographic information that we do not have to develop ourselves," he wrote.

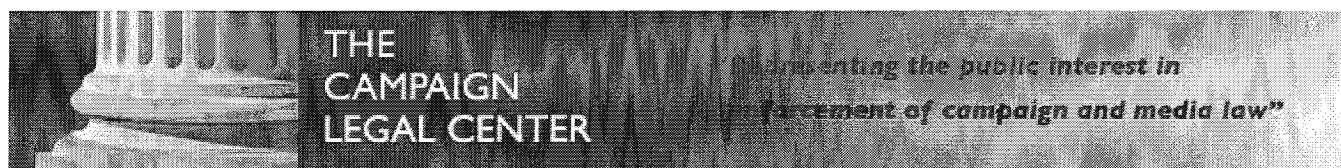
"We were able to overlay the Census information on the number of addresses the Census had per Census block with the parcel map and the Bing aerials to allow anyone to compare the Census number with the actual count of houses," Kelly wrote. "With a glance, as we receive more data, we can see the patterns of the Census effort."

While the response rates are off to a slow start, the overall goal of the site's creation is being realized.

"The most valuable result of the [www.myfloridacensus.gov](http://www.myfloridacensus.gov) website was that it proved that the combination of Silverlight, Bing Maps and the Azure Cloud storage is a viable option to build a redistricting website on, that will be available to the public and meet Florida House leadership goal of making the next redistricting process the most open in Florida's history," Kelly wrote.

MJ

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## CAMPAIGN LEGAL CENTER BLOG

Posted April 26, 2010 by By Leon W. Russell, Nicholas Stephanopoulos and J. Gerald Hebert

### Don't Water Down Hope for Fair Districts

*The following opinion piece ran in the Tallahassee Democrat on April 25, 2010.*

The gerrymander — that ugly but all-too-common creature — has thrived in Florida for years.

Serpentine congressional and legislative districts traverse the state everywhere you look. Elections are shockingly uncompetitive, with only three incumbents in the Legislature losing over the past six years (out of 420 elections). And even though there are more registered Democrats than Republicans in Florida, Republicans control 15 out of 25 congressional seats, 76 out of 120 state House seats, and 26 out of 40 state Senate seats.

Hoping to curb this out-of-control gerrymandering, Florida's voters recently placed two initiatives on the ballot for this fall's elections (one for Congress, one for the Legislature). These initiatives, sponsored by the nonpartisan group FairDistrictsFlorida.org, would ban line-drawers from trying to "favor or disfavor a political party or an incumbent." Instead, districts would have to be compact and contiguous, to respect existing political and geographical boundaries and to safeguard minority voting rights.

The FairDistricts initiatives have been applauded by almost every unbiased observer of the Florida political scene. Major newspapers throughout the state (including the *Tallahassee Democrat*) have endorsed them. The Brennan Center for Justice, a well-regarded institute specializing in election law, concluded that they are "well-crafted" and "elegantly resolve the many competing interests in drawing district lines." The Florida Supreme Court rejected every legal challenge that was mustered against them. As for Florida's voters, almost a million of them signed the petitions, and the polls show overwhelming support for putting an end to gerrymandering.

Opposition to the initiatives now stems from two sources — one somewhat unexpected, the other not surprising in the least.

The unexpected objections come from certain minority groups who worry that their influence would be diminished if Florida's districts were to undergo substantial change. Fortunately, these fears are unfounded. The initiatives actually include protections for minority voting rights that are stronger than federal law and far more robust than anything currently on the books in Florida. For these reasons, the NAACP recently endorsed the measures in the strongest possible terms.

The entirely unsurprising opposition comes from Florida's Republicans — the architects and beneficiaries of the gerrymandered status quo. First, Republicans in the Legislature tried to persuade the Florida Supreme Court to strike down the FairDistricts initiatives (a trick they also pulled in getting a similar 2006 proposal nullified). When this effort failed, a Republican-controlled board came up with financial impact statements for the initiatives that were so misleading that the statements had to be

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Even as revised in committee, the poison pill amendment lacks all of the good ideas that are in the FairDistricts initiatives. It says nothing about blocking plans that stifle competition or advance only a single party's interests. It doesn't require districts to be compact. Its protections for minority voting rights are weak and easily sidestepped. And, most deviously, it would sabotage the FairDistricts initiatives even if they pass. The amendment gives "priority to (its own) standards" over all other provisions, and it states that plans are valid as long as they are "rationally related to the standards contained in this constitution." This amounts to an instruction to the courts never to strike down a district map, no matter how unfair, uncompetitive or bizarre it is.

Every member of the Legislature who cares about the integrity of Florida's elections should vote against the poison pill amendment. Since it requires a three-fifths majority in both chambers to make the ballot, opponents do have a shot at stopping this brazen effort to preserve Florida's awful gerrymandering.

At the very least, the amendment's supporters should be pressed hard to explain themselves. Why do they want to maintain the status quo? What exactly are their objections to the FairDistricts initiatives? And why are they trying to place their measure on the same ballot as the initiatives, where it will distract and confuse Florida's voters?

Whether or not the Legislature passes the poison pill amendment, the battle over the FairDistricts initiatives will be fierce. Critics will argue (wrongly) that they are a "power grab" by the Democrats, that they will harm minorities, and that they will give rise to endless lawsuits. Harsh words and hyperbolic rhetoric will fill the airwaves. In all this din, it will be crucial not to lose sight of the big picture: The FairDistricts initiatives are Florida's best opportunity in decades to end gerrymandering and make elections fair again. Come November, Floridians wishing to regain control over their democracy would be wise to vote for the initiatives — and to spit out the Legislature's poison pill.

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*Leon W. Russell is the past president and current chairman of the legislative committee of the Florida NAACP. Nicholas Stephanopoulos is an attorney at Jenner & Block LLP, specializing in election law. J. Gerald Hebert is the executive director of the nonprofit Campaign Legal Center and represented Florida's congressional Democrats in the post-2000 redistricting cycle and the U.S. Department of Justice in the post-1990 round of Florida redistricting.*

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May 13, 2010

This is the print preview: [Back to normal view »](#)

**Nicholas Stephanopoulos**

An attorney with the Washington, D.C. office of Jenner & Block, specializing in election law and appellate work.

Posted: April 26, 2010 11:31 AM

## **Spitting Out the Poison Pill**

The gerrymander - that ugly but all-too-common creature - has thrived in Florida for years. Serpentine Congressional and legislative districts traverse the state everywhere you look. Elections are shockingly uncompetitive, with just three incumbents in the Legislature losing over the past six years (out of 420 elections). And even though there are more registered Democrats than Republicans in Florida, Republicans control 15 out of 25 Congressional seats, 76 out of 120 House seats, and 26 out of 40 Senate seats.

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Opposition to the initiatives now stems from two sources - one somewhat unexpected, the other not surprising in the least. The unexpected objections come from certain minority groups who worry that their influence would be diminished if Florida's districts were to undergo substantial change. Fortunately, these fears are unfounded. The initiatives actually include protections for minority voting rights that are *stronger* than federal law and far more robust than

anything currently on the books in Florida. For these reasons, the NAACP recently endorsed the measures in the strongest possible terms.

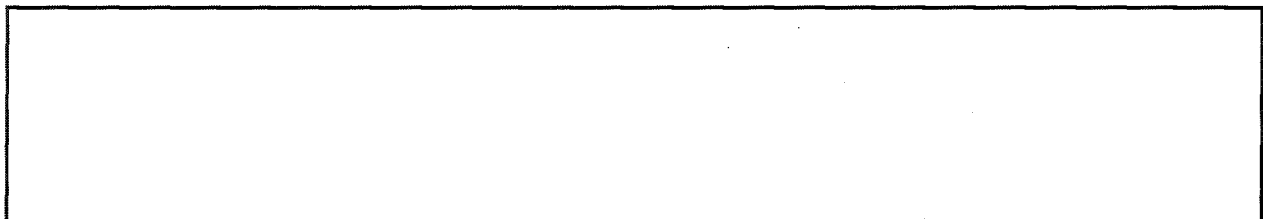
The entirely unsurprising opposition comes from Florida's Republicans - the architects and beneficiaries of the gerrymandered status quo. First, Republicans in the Legislature tried to convince the Florida Supreme Court to strike down the FairDistricts initiatives (a trick they also pulled in getting a similar 2006 proposal nullified). When this effort failed, a Republican-controlled board came up with financial impact statements for the initiatives that were so misleading that the statements had to be redrafted. Most recently, future Senate President Mike Haridopolos and future House Speaker Dean Cannon proposed another redistricting amendment that, if passed, would also appear on the 2010 ballot.

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Every member of the Legislature who cares about the integrity of Florida's elections should therefore vote against the poison pill amendment. Since it requires a three-fifths majority in both chambers to make the ballot, opponents do have a shot at stopping this brazen effort to preserve Florida's awful gerrymandering. At the very least, the amendment's supporters should be pressed hard to explain themselves. Why do they want to maintain the status quo? What exactly are their objections to the FairDistricts initiatives? And why are they trying to place their measure on the same ballot as the initiatives, where it will distract and confuse Florida's voters?

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*A version of this column was published in the Tallahassee Democrat on April 25.*



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4/26/10



## **Time Sensitive: Call Sen Atwater RE HJR 7231 and SJR 2288**

TIME SENSITIVE! URGENT! Call President of the Senate Atwater and tell him not to let SJR2288/HJR7231 get to the floor for a vote. ~ 1-850-487-5100

### The Backstory from Capital Soup

In the final days of the 2010 legislative session, Republican leaders are attempting to thwart the will of the voters who signed 1.7 million petitions in support of fair redistricting standards. In a desperate attempt to hold on to their power to draw districts for political purposes, some members have filed counter amendments (HJR7231/SJR 2288) that seek to confuse voters and undermine Fair Districts amendments 5 & 6. Republican leaders are promoting these poison-pill amendments in the name of protecting minority rights. Yet prominent members of the minority community have called this effort “a sham.”

April 26, 2010

Categories: [Florida](#), [politics](#) . Tags: [HJR 7231](#), [SJR 2288](#) . Author: [tangerineflorida](#)

### **3 Comments**



1. *Comment by tangerineflorida on April 26, 2010 10:16 pm*  
0 0 Rate This

For Immediate Release: April 26, 2010

Contact:... See More

Deirdre Macnab, President (407) 415-4559

Marilynn Wills, Vice President (850) 570-6237

The League of Women Voters of Florida strongly objects to the vote today by the Florida House of Representatives to place HJR 7231 on the November ballot. The League believes this measure and its Senate companion, SJR 2288, would undermine the intent of the FairDistrictsFlorida amendments 5 and 6 to bring fairness to the redistricting process in Florida.

The proposed constitutional amendment, brought forth in the last two weeks of the legislative session, seeks to confuse voters into thinking they are voting for reform when in actuality they are voting for the status quo. The League helped the Fair Districts effort gather nearly 1.7 million signatures of Floridians who are tired of the legislature drawing district lines to protect incumbent politicians and preserve political power. Now that the people have spoken and placed amendments 5 and 6 on the ballot, the legislature is trying to override their effort through sneaky and deceptive backroom maneuverings.

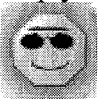
"The citizens of Florida should be outraged," said Deirdre Macnab, President of the League of Women Voters of Florida. "It's a despicable attempt by the legislature to avoid the will of the people and retain the power to draw districts to serve themselves, the political parties and not the voters."

HJR 7231 passed the House by two votes more than was necessary. Its Senate counterpart SJR 2288 will likely come up in the Senate on Tuesday. The League of Women Voters of Florida is calling on all Florida citizens to contact their legislators and urge them to vote NO on this sham amendment.

"This legislation should be called "Unfair Districts," said Marilyn Wills, Vice President and State Action Chair. "This is a Tallahassee power grab pure and simple."

<http://www.TheFloridaVoter.org>

Reply



2. *Comment by tangerineflorida on April 26, 2010 7:49 pm*  
0 0 Rate This

"Nearly 1.7 million...

That's how many Floridians signed petitions and worked for years to place ballot initiatives before the voters to create a truly fair redistricting process in Florida. We've made it this far and they are ready to be voted on, but legislators in Tallahassee are trying to circumvent the voters'

wishes at the eleventh hour.

The House vote[d] today and the Senate will vote tomorrow to place a constitutional amendment – Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 2288 and House Joint Resolution (HJR) 7231 – on the ballot in November that would undermine the Fair Districts Florida ballot initiatives. If the legislators succeed, they will effectively railroad the constitutional process that is supposed to give voters a voice in how our laws are made. This is not what we sent our leaders to Tallahassee to do, and this affront to the people of Florida must not stand.

Please take two steps today to stop these shameful proposals:

1) Email your senator and representative NOW and urge them to vote no on SJR 2288 and HJR 7231;and

<http://fl.aclu.org/site/R?i=srJlFoa0nk2ZlnBltrMtAw..>

2) Call your senator and representative's office and tell them to vote no. [find their numbers at the Legislature's Web page].

<http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Welcome/index.cfm?CFID=147602376&CFTOKEN=73118658>

Why would legislators try to silence voters? Simple: They don't want to give up their power. That's why you need to tell legislators to oppose this anti-voter initiative aimed at taking power away from voters and keeping it in Tallahassee.

Neither SJR 2288 nor HJR 7231 prohibit the drawing of districts for the purpose of favoring or disfavoring a political party or incumbent, nor do the proposals have a provision for making districts compact or for requiring districts to follow local boundaries. Without these provisions, map drawers will have free reign to design districts to favor themselves or their colleagues.

Furthermore, SJR 2288 and HJR 7231's purported safeguards for minority voters – voters who have traditionally faced unfair barriers to exercising their right to vote – certainly provide no better protection, and likely much less, than the Fair Districts language, which has been studied and vetted and is known to add protections for minority voters that do not exist today.

Floridians have resoundingly voiced their support for placing the Fair Districts constitutional amendments on the ballot. Florida legislators need to honor the wishes of the nearly 1.7 million citizens who signed the Fair Districts petitions.

Tell your senator and representative to stop this shameful attack on the will of Floridians – it's time for constituents to pick their legislators, and not the other way around.

...follow this simple script:

“As your constituent, I urge you to oppose SJR 2288 & HJR 7231 – this is a blatant attempt to undermine Fair Districts. Voters should be able to select their representatives, not the other way around.””

ACLU of Florida

Reply



3. *Comment by tangerineflorida on April 26, 2010 7:21 pm*  
0 0 Rate This

This from Fair Districts Florida to the 1.7 million citizens of Florida who signed the citizen petition to place Amendments 5 and 6 on the ballot in November.

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“We knew it would happen, and it did. ... See More

Leadership in Tallahassee does not want the people telling them to stop using redistricting to protect their own seats. They are trying to put “their own rival amendment on the ballot.. to say that even if FairDistricts Amendments 5 and 6 pass this November — they won’t count.” – St. Petersburg Times.

The Gainesville Sun and the Lakeland Ledger call it “despicable”!

The Palm Beach Post says, “Everything about it stinks”!

The NAACP calls it a “sham”!

---

Other papers have chimed in and Fair Districts Florida hopes to use the following language in its ads.

Will Sen. Atwater be a Leader? Tell him to stop the Senate from “fighting fair elections?”  
-Orlando Sentinel

Will Sen. Atwater be a true statesman? Tell him he should not let the Senate continue “doing something stinky?”  
-TampaBay.com

We need Sen. Atwater to stand up for the voters. Tell him to stop the Senate from “grasping power?”  
-Gainesville Sun


We need Sen. Atwater to stand up for the people? Tell him to stop the Senate from “showing disdain for democracy?”  
-Orlando Sentinel

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Fair Districts Florida needs funds to advertise in the home districts of the legislative leadership and requests donations be made to the cause.

<http://www.fairdistrictsflorida.org/donate>

advertisement

<p><b>Help people in need.</b> Donate your car, boat or RV</p>	<p><b>Free Towing ■ Tax Deductible</b> Call Toll-Free <b>1-877-225-9384</b></p>	
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## Census mail results could be trouble for 5 states

Lackluster participation may cost N.Y., Calif., Ariz., Fla. and Texas seats

By HOPE YEN

The Associated Press

updated 4:55 p.m. ET, Wed., April 28, 2010

WASHINGTON - Five states — New York, California, Texas, Arizona and Florida — are perilously close to losing out on congressional seats because of lackluster participation in the U.S. census.

The five were average or below average in mailing back 10-question census forms when compared to other states, trailing by as many as 5 percentage points, according to the final census mail-in tally released Wednesday.

Based on recent population trends, New York, California and Texas had been estimated to fall just above the cutoff for the last House seats when they are redistributed next year. Waiting behind them in hopes of picking up additional seats are Arizona and Florida, which are already expected to gain one seat apiece.

Responses from these states also raise a red flag because of their higher shares of residents who are Latinos. The Census Bureau has said one of its main concerns is whether tensions over immigration will discourage Latinos, and particularly illegal immigrants, from participating in the government count. That issue returned to the forefront after Arizona passed a tough immigration enforcement bill.

Latino residents represent a predominant share of the population growth in New York, California, Texas, Arizona and Florida, making up more than 50 percent of total growth since 2000. As a result, those states could face big losses if there isn't full cooperation when the Census Bureau on Saturday begins knocking on the doors of those who did not respond by mail.

Of the five states on the cusp, the biggest potential

losers are California and New York, which could have a net loss of one and two House seats, respectively. Texas may end up gaining just three House seats instead of four.

### 'Incredibly disappointed'

Arturo Vargas, executive director of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials, said he was concerned about some skittish Latinos who may refuse to answer their doors, particularly given Arizona's new immigration law.

"I'm incredibly disappointed with the Obama administration in their efforts to promote the census," Vargas said, citing the government's failure to halt immigration raids during the count as it did in 2000. "It may have the impact of shooting people in the foot if Arizona ends up losing out on a House seat."

States such as Minnesota and Oregon are next in line to pick up seats. Minnesota had the nation's second-highest mail response at 80 percent — a clear boost in its effort to avert the loss of a seat, even after Rep. Michele Bachmann, R-Minn., made clear her view that

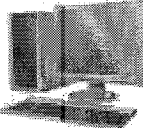
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the 10-question census was an invasion of privacy.

North Carolina, which snatched a seat from Utah in 2000 when overseas missionaries were excluded from the count, also remains in play to gain a seat.

"It would be a bit ironic if Minnesota ends up a winner," said Kimball Brace, president of Election Data Services, a Virginia-based firm that crunches political numbers. "With the immigration concern, that's going to have an impact. Both New York and California are in the position of losing seats, but they haven't done as much as they could in spending to improve on outreach."

#### 'The census is not over'

On Wednesday, Census Bureau director Robert Groves attributed the strong mail participation rate of 72 percent to the bureau's advertising and outreach campaign, which helped overcome growing public apathy toward surveys as well as distrust of the government. But he said it remained uncertain how that will translate to "how the American public reacts when we knock on their door."

"The census is not over," said Groves, who noted the non-respondents were disproportionately low-income, lesser-educated or renters. "For those of you who haven't been counted in the 2010 census, this is your moment."

The midterm report comes as the Census Bureau prepares to begin door-to-door canvassing, the most costly and error-prone portion of the count.

In all, more than 600,000 workers will fan neighborhoods at rates of \$10 to \$25 an hour until mid-July to query people on the 10 census questions on race, gender and family relationships. It's part of a government hiring spree the Commerce Department says could alter the unemployment rate by several tenths of a percentage point in April and May.

At training sessions this week, temporary census workers were instructed on the protocols of conducting interviews, such as how to tabulate answers on race (let people self-identify if they're multiracial, but a label of "American" isn't a sufficient

response), where to ask questions (outside, since census workers should not ask to enter a person's home) and carrying proper identification (government badges and a "U.S. Census Bureau" bag).

Census workers also are being told to be respectful if homeowners refuse to cooperate, to keep data confidential and to alert supervisors if there are signs of danger. In the last 12 years, there have been 21 work-related deaths involving census employees, including a dog attack on a 71-year-old worker in 2000.

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Pinellas Patriots Message Board > CALL TO ACTION I > Fair Districts in Florida ~ Call your Florida State Senator

## Fair Districts in Florida ~ Call your Florida State Senator

**kathy**



CornerPatriot  
Largo, FL  
Post #: 775



**Posted Apr 28, 2010 1:02 PM**

[Link to this discussion](#)

Some of Florida's most liberal special interests are trying to rig the process of redistricting state and federal legislative districts in our great state. Their goal is to derail Florida's conservative majority and replace it with more pro-Obama liberals.

**Call Florida State Senators and tell them to pass S 2288.**

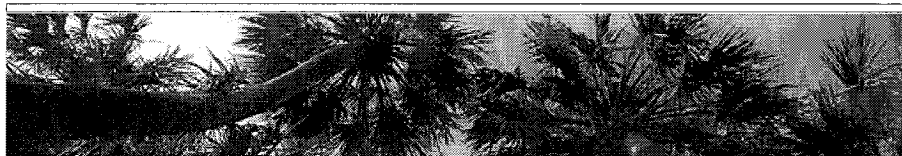
<http://www.flsenate.g...>

If we win, these bills will put an amendment on the November ballot that fixes and clarifies two other constitutional amendments (5 and 6) that are already be on the November ballot. Amendments 5 and 6 are the product of NAACP and Democrat labor unions. The bills we want passed are the way to stop 5 and 6 from destroying the conservative movement in our legislatures.

From the Florida 9.12 Project

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Tuesday, May 11, 2010

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Author	Message
<b>P.C. 94</b> Active Member 	<b>Topic: State Legislators trying to amend fair districting</b> Posted: 04/30/2010 at 6:12pm <a href="#">Quote</a> <a href="#">Reply</a>
	Lawmakers move to stymie redistricting reform by trying to slip an imposter on the ballot
 Joined: 08/29/2008 No. of Posts: 425	<p>Sandra Horikami Daytona Beach News Journal Wednesday Apr 28, 2010</p> <p>ShareThis</p> <p>Voters in Volusia County who petitioned for the Fair Districts Florida amendments (Amendments 5 and 6) that will be on the November ballot, should be outraged! Your efforts are about to be nullified by your legislators.</p> <p>After the census information is received and before the 2012 elections, the Florida Legislature will draw up new voting districts. Historically, this process has been political and controlled by the majority party. For too long citizens across the state have been drawn into zig-zag districts for the purposes of re-electing incumbents instead of representing our citizens' needs and interests.</p> <p>The League of Women Voters has long opposed this process; in 2007, we joined FairDistrictsFlorida.org in proposing two constitutional amendments that would establish standards for drawing congressional and legislative districts -- districts that would not favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party and would insure that minorities would have equal opportunity to participate in the political process and elect representatives of their choice.</p> <p>After two years of gathering more than 1.7 million petitions, the amendments made it to the ballot. Florida voters petitioned for these two amendments. Now, in the last two weeks of the legislative session, lawmakers have decided that the amendments need "clarification" and have put forth their own amendment (SJR 2288/HJR 7231). However, the lawmakers' amendment, if passed, will nullify the redistricting amendments that voters wanted and once again allow legislators to draw districts where they get to choose their voters.</p> <p>The citizen initiative process, though time-consuming, is a way to address issues the citizenry think need reform. It is discouraging to find that, after two years of petition gathering, the Senate can write an amendment that essentially nullifies the amendments we support in the last two weeks of the legislative session. Your elected lawmakers that represent you are ignoring the voices of more than 1 one million</p>

talk that this Orwellian legislative session was all about, from top to bottom. Black is White, Good is Bad, Greed is Generosity, Obstruction is Protection.

Oh, yeah. They also managed to fulfill their single mandatory task of the 60-day session, passing a 70-billion dollar budget - which *"No Party Affiliation"* Governor Crist may yet veto. The budget cuts back sharply on a whole host of social service programs that provide a vital safety net for seniors, children, the poor & needy - *while still leaving a 3- billion dollar state budget deficit.*

Why?

Because Republicans refuse to raise taxes for their large corporate benefactors. Because they won't raise taxes or close gaping loopholes for rich real estate developers and ultra-rich individuals who live off their estates without working for a living.

Now that this horrible bunch of elected officials has run roughshod over the 2010 legislative session, they are marching off into the final months of their midterm election battles - ***which gives us voters our one opportunity to pay them back for all the damage they've done, and still plan to do.***

<http://www.youtube.com/user/dptilson>

Daniel Tilson was born and raised in New York City, a graduate of Stuyvesant High School, and New York University's Film and Television School, with a double major in Film/TV Production & Broadcast Journalism. Tilson established his own first ([more...](#))

The views expressed in this article are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of this website or its editors.



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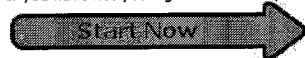
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## Audit: Computer glitches hurting census

Failures are adding to overtime, raising possibility of going over budget

The Associated Press

updated 6:29 p.m. ET, Wed., May 5, 2010

WASHINGTON - Frequent outages in a Census Bureau computer system used to manage the 2010 count are driving up costs and put the accuracy at risk because of substantial overtime required to deal with the problem, a new audit says.

The report from the Commerce Department inspector general's office, obtained Wednesday by The Associated Press, offers new details on the scope of problems as more than 600,000 census workers begin fanning neighborhoods this month to conduct interviews at 48 million homes.

It said major outages had caused a 40-hour backlog of work over two weeks in April, causing substantial amounts of overtime and other workarounds. Overtime costs have already reached more than \$1.6 million, with costs expected to balloon higher — potentially beyond the Census Bureau's \$15 billion budget — due to the heavy workload now required in its door-to-door canvassing.

Investigators said the demands in dealing with the computer problems were threatening to "diminish staff retention," add to costs if the system was unable to process census forms that were mailed in late as planned, and cause inaccuracies if census data can't be put in the system immediately.

"If performance problems persist, they will put the successful completion (of the census) at risk," the report states, in urging the Census Bureau to add staff and implement more manual and automated checks to make certain census questionnaires are not lost.

In a news briefing this week, Census Bureau director Robert Groves acknowledged the problems but said that officials had gotten over a "big hump" in the workload in the past week when they were able to

print assignments for more than 600,000 enumerators.

Groves has predicted that the additional costs for staffing will not cause the bureau to exceed its budget for the 2010 count, even while acknowledging that ultimately it will depend on how well the door-to-door count is conducted through mid-July.

"The system is still shaky. We have a lot of workarounds around it," Groves said. "It's fulfilled the needs of the other operations we're doing, and we got over this big hump. But it isn't perfect. I don't want to portray it as an optimally performing system, it is not that."

The computer problems are a result of hasty design to the bureau's Paper Based Operations Control System that began in early 2008, after the Census Bureau scrapped plans to use a handheld-computer method that ended up costing more than \$700 million but did not operate adequately.

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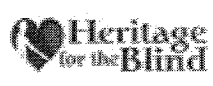
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Returning to the paper-based method boosted the cost of the census by about \$3 billion to a total of nearly \$15 billion. But in the report on Wednesday, the IG report questioned whether the bureau could stay within budget because of ongoing outages in the system.

Other findings in the IG report:

- The Census Bureau's monthly spending reports are somewhat unreliable, with actual costs exceeding the operating budget by as much as 7 percent. When expenditures fell below costs, in many cases it was because of "salaries that were not incurred, obligations that were delayed and delays in hiring local census office staff" that may show up in later expense reports.
- Census takers have met difficulties with assignments due to faulty maps, overstaffing and inefficient coordination. Training is ineffective in some areas; there are numerous errors in the manuals and the "one-size-fits-all" approach that does not always address the "challenges unique to a specific geography or location." The population count, conducted every 10 years, is used to distribute House seats and more than \$400 billion in federal aid. *Copyright 2010 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.* URL: [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/36972844/ns/us\\_news-census\\_2010/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/36972844/ns/us_news-census_2010/) MSN Privacy . Legal© 2010 MSNBC.com

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## Talk To Me

Ask anyone who knows me, I'd stop St. Peter's roll call to start a conversation. I'm a longtime Brevard County resident blessed with the gift of gab. Get settled behind your keyboard. Let's talk local...and state...and national.



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TUESDAY, MAY 11, 2010

### Fair Districts



Republicans sit back in cozy control of 64% of the state legislative seats. Yet, only 36% of Florida voters are Republicans.

With all the political eggs obviously gathered in the one basket, who let the fox into the hen house?

Mr. Gerry Mander opened the door.

*Talk to Me* ([Meet Mr. Gerry Mander, \(8/6/2007\):](#)

(...)

Redistricting updates district lines to reflect shifts in population

### About Me

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Sheree

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to guarantee the equality of your vote.

Let's use the creation of the 24th Congressional district--(formerly Tom) Feeney's district--as an example of what happens when too many Hatfields run Appalachia. The Republican majority drew lines to dip and weave through the friendly and unfriendly areas of Brevard, Orange, Seminole and Brevard counties, creating a district of the then 156,292 registered Republicans compared to 126,976 Democrats.

Gerry help(ed) Tom get a lock on his district. Once elected, incumbents like Feeney--are virtually protected from outside competitors. In many cases--as witnessed here locally--incumbents ran unopposed because the McCoys can't run a competitive campaign against a Hatfield in a territory controlled by--you got it...the Hatfields.

Gerry helps out unopposed incumbents because they don't need your vote anymore to retain office. As a result, elected officials become less accountable to their constituents and more allegiant to their party, who in turn provides a hand up the political ladder.

Without fear of being held accountable for their lack of productivity, state legislators don't sweat the bad times of property tax reform and insurance crisis too badly. They know Gerry's got their back--at least, until term limited out. The fun starts all over again with Gerry leading the game of Political Musical Chairs, almost guaranteeing the faces will simply swap political seats in Hatfield county.

Fair Districts will help Katie bar the door against legislative and congressional Etch A Sketch. The citizen initiative--**Fair Districts Amendments 5 and 6**--is on the ballot this November. With the passage, communities would remain intact, preventing the creative division among multiple representatives.

The current majority (including some members of the minority) is none too keen on the possible loss of their power grab and have initiated their own redistricting plan in the form of a constitutional amendment. Although FairDistricts addresses "...*the (fair) representation of racial and language minority voters...*", with the passage of both amendments, that's the wedge factor state Senator Mike Haridopolos chose to dissuade voters.

The Miami Herald, 5/11/10):

(...)

Haridopolos helped propose another amendment -- also on the

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Melbourne, Florida left "Talk To



ballot -- that says lawmakers shall ``take into consideration the ability of racial and language minorities to participate in the political process and elect candidates of their choice." The amendment also says ``communities of interest other than political parties may be respected and promoted." That brings the number of redistricting amendments to three on the ballot.

Haridopolos said the new amendment ``clarifies" the Fair Districts proposals. Opponents say it causes confusion, in part because ``communities of interest" isn't clearly defined.

Senate Democratic leader Al Lawson and Democratic Sen. Gary Siplin, leader of the black caucus, sided with Haridopolos. In the House, Rep. Darryl Rouson of St. Petersburg was the only black Democrat who supported the Republican initiative.

Siplin acknowledged that he helped draft the amendment to ``protect" senators like him.

During redistricting, Haridopolos says, it's also ``possible" that a minority-heavy congressional seat in the Orlando area might be drawn with Siplin in mind.

Expect lots of dollars to be spent in effort to confuse Floridians into thinking the Legislature actually knows what's best for us.

As I said back in 2007, kick Gerry out.

Incumbency should not be a monarchy--for any political party.

Read more about [FairDistrictsFlorida](#) here.

Labels: [Fair Districts Florida](#), [gerry mandering](#), [Mike Haridopolos](#)

posted by Sheree @ 4:25 AM

5 comments 

### 5 Comments:

At 5/11/10 8:23 AM,  Anonymous said...

FRom Diogenes - Some changes occurred in Osceola County that affected votes for the School Boad. There was an investigation by the federal government under the previous administration after complaints from Hispanic constituents and change occurred. I don't have the links now, just a memory of events.

Interesting information.


At 5/11/10 5:28 PM,  Anonymous said...


RonnieRaygun wrote:


Sheree - If you recall, Tom Delay attempted the same game plan in Texas. For the life of me I don't remember if he failed or succeeded.


Thanks for the link, FairDistrcitsFlorida. This is a PR battle we can't


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[How to Clean an Oiled Bird, Talk to Me](#), 12:53 a.m.

[My Captain opposed my DADT discharge, Bilerico Project Florida](#), Mon 10:28 p.m.

[Senator Alex Diaz de la Portilla's Wife Gets an Order of Protection. B...](#), Eye On Miami, Mon 9:45 p.m.

[Nodine indicted for murder](#),

# Florida Redistricting Amendment (2010)

## From Ballotpedia

**Florida Redistricting Amendment** will appear on the November 2, 2010 ballot in Florida as an legislatively-referred constitutional amendment. The proposal, known as HJR 7231, calls for barring lawmakers from favoring a political party or incumbent when redrawing legislative or congressional district lines. However, the proposal would allow lawmakers to continue basing districts on "communities of common interest."<sup>[1][2][3]</sup>

On April 26 the House voted 74-42 to refer the amendment to the ballot.<sup>[4]</sup> The Senate voted 25-14 on April 30; qualifying the measure for the ballot.<sup>[5][6]</sup> In order to qualify for the November 2010 ballot the proposed amendment required a minimum of 60% in the both the House and the Senate.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Contents

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- 2 Opposition
  - 2.1 Arguments
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- 5 Path to the ballot
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## Florida Constitution



### Articles

Preamble • I • II • III • IV • V • VI • VII • VIII • IX • X • XI • XII

## Support

Supporters of the proposed amendment, sponsored by Rep. Dorothy Hukill and Senators Mike Haridopolos, Gary Siplin and Alfred Lawson, argue that the amendment would clarify the two certified redistricting initiatives scheduled to appear on the ballot.<sup>[8]</sup> The proposed measure is supported by House Speaker-designate Dean Cannon and Senate President-designate Mike Haridopolos.<sup>[9]</sup>

## Arguments

Sen. Gary Siplin said, "It clarifies the Legislature's duty to apply federal law while balancing it with existing state standards and case law."<sup>[10]</sup> Additionally, Republicans argue that the proposed amendment would help ensure minority representation. Rep. Erik Fresen and Rep. William Proctor argue that the proposed Amendment 5 and 6 (on the 2010 ballot) would not help minorities and only create a few minority-majority districts.<sup>[4]</sup>

- Rep. Dorothy Hukill and Rep. Chris Dorworth said they question the motives behind the Fair District amendments and whether they were a grassroots effort or heavily financed by special interest groups like ACORN.<sup>[4]</sup>
- Rep. Steve Crisafulli said, "Amendments 5 and 6 claim to be locally focused with communities at heart, but they are not. Simply said, this joint resolution is. Members, I encourage you for the sake of those communities that you represent to vote in favor of this common sense joint resolution."<sup>[11]</sup>
- **Dr. Daniel E. Loeb** supports the need to address the "well-intentioned but poorly designed"

Amendments 5 and 6. Dr. Daniel Elliott Loeb has a Ph.D. in mathematics from MIT. His research interests include the mathematics of voting, mathematical finance, statistics and game theory. Dr. Loeb notes that Amendments 5 and 6 will inadvertently result in political gridlock and "less competitive" elections. "Fair District Florida's proposed amendments to the Florida State Constitution not only fail to address the current situation, they will make matters worse."<sup>[12]</sup>

## Opposition

House Democrats, according to reports, disagree with the proposed amendment because they said that it would undermine the two citizen initiatives already certified for the ballot.<sup>[8]</sup> Rep. Ronald Brise said, "This resolution seeks to weaken the will of the people." Rep. Richard Steinberg said, "This is about incumbency protection and preserving the status quo."<sup>[4]</sup>

## Arguments

Of the proposed amendment Rep. Ron Saunders said, "Once again we have certain members saying they know better, they know what's right and they have a better idea of what people need than people that are most affected. If the NAACP says this is a bad amendment I think I would take their word."<sup>[2]</sup>

- Sponsors of Amendment 5 and 6, the Fair Districts campaign, argue that the proposed amendment is a perfect example of why the initiative amendments are needed. "Those in power will do everything they can to protect their seats, avoid truly competitive elections, and maintain the ability to manipulate districts for political gain," said Ellen Freidin.<sup>[13]</sup>
- Rep. Rick Kriseman said, "The fundamentalist Republicans supporting this bill are pushing this bill because it will still favor incumbents. It will ensure that the party in charge remains in charge." House Democratic Leader Franklin Sands agreed. He said, "...it's a desperate attempt to hold onto power and to keep the status quo and to disrespect the will of the people."<sup>[11]</sup>
- Sandra Horikami, president of the League of Women Voters of Volusia County who helped petition for the citizen redistricting initiatives (Amendment 5 & 6), said, "It is discouraging to find that, after two years of petition gathering, the Senate can write an amendment that essentially nullifies the amendments we support in the last two weeks of the legislative session. Your elected lawmakers that represent you are ignoring the voices of more than 1 one million voters who signed these petitions. Having the Fair Districts Florida amendments and the legislators' amendments on the ballot will be confusing to voters at the polls. The Senate's amendment should not make it to the ballot."<sup>[14]</sup>

## Media endorsements

### Opposition

- **The Palm Beach Post** opposes the proposed legislatively-referred redistricting amendment. In an editorial, the board said, "Gall. Shamelessness. Hypocrisy. Self-interest. All were on display Monday as the Florida House approved a constitutional amendment designed to let politicians keep picking voters...The spectacle Monday made clear why Amendments 5 and 6 should be on the ballot by themselves. Given the choice between the people and power, politicians will go with power every time."<sup>[15]</sup>

## Similar measures

The amendment was proposed in response to the already certified Amendment 5 and Amendment 6, which are will appear on the 2010 statewide ballot. The measures propose amending the current practice of drawing legislative and congressional district boundaries in such ways that they establish "fairness," are "as equal in population as feasible" and use "city, county and geographical boundaries."<sup>[16]</sup>

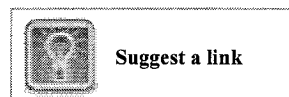
## Path to the ballot

*See also: Florida law for legislatively-referred constitutional amendments*

In order to qualify for the November 2010 ballot the proposed amendment must be approved by a minimum of 60% in the both the House and the Senate. The proposal cleared a Senate Committee on April 23 and a House panel on April 22.<sup>[1]</sup> On April 26 the House voted 74-42 to place the amendment on the ballot.<sup>[4]</sup> The Senate voted 25-14; qualifying the measure for the ballot.<sup>[17]</sup><sup>[6]</sup>

## See also

- 2010 ballot measures
- Florida 2010 ballot measures



## Related measures

- Florida Legislative District Boundaries, Amendment 5 (2010)
- Florida Congressional District Boundaries, Amendment 6 (2010)

## Articles

- Third redistricting measure approved by Florida lawmakers
- Florida's 2010 ballot may have not 2 but 3 redistricting measures

## External links

- HJR 7231 summary
- HJR 7231 full text, as approved in final passage

## Additional reading

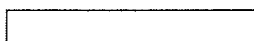
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## Talk To Me

Ask anyone who knows me, I'd stop St. Peter's roll call to start a conversation. I'm a longtime Brevard County resident blessed with the gift of gab. Get settled behind your keyboard. Let's talk local...and state...and national.



**PROGRESS FLORIDA**  
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MONDAY, MAY 24, 2010

### Florida's Wabba Dabba Do



While Rand Paul Palin-ed out of Sunday's *Meet the Press*, a whole lot of newsmaking was going on right here at home.

\*\*\*

--The NAACP and the League of Women Voters filed suit in attempt to strike Amendment 7 from the November 2 ballot. The Florida Legislature hurriedly wrote and just as hurriedly passed their version of a redistricting amendment through the Senate at the close of session to counter and confuse voters regarding two anti-gerrymandering citizen initiatives, Amendment 5 and 6.

#### About Me

Name:  
Sheree

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League of Women Voters President Deirdre Macnab sums up Faux Districts 7 as "dishonest". *"Our whole lawsuit is based upon the premise that this amendment does many things that are misleading in the way they're worded," Meyer said. "It's written with such wabba dabba that constitutional lawyers have trouble figuring out what it does, much less the ordinary voter."*

Upon passage, Fair Districts Amendment 5 and 6 would amend the Florida Constitution to ensure that post-census, voting districts are redrawn based on keeping communities intact rather than allowing the Party in legislative power to redistrict to favor or disfavor a political party.

Passage of Amendment 7 would negate both or either/or Amendment 5 and 6.

Read more over at [The Palm Beach Post](#), 5/21/2010.

\*\*\*

--It's *two--two--two* endorsements for U.S. Senate by the Florida Education Association: candidates Charlie Crist, Independent and Democrat Kendrick Meek. *"Kendrick Meek has always been a strong backer of public education and our positions for as long as he has been in public service,"* FEA President Andy Ford said. *"We think an independent Charlie Crist working for Floridians would also be a great asset in the Senate."*

Noticeably absent from roll call. Republican candidate Marco Rubio.

Read more over at [The Miami Herald](#), 5/23/2010.

\*\*\*

--With Rand Paul AWOL, the *Meet the Press* gang had plenty of time to dish BP Oil in the Loop. Seems those who have covered the toughest news stories of our time are a bit worried by what this way may come.

(...)

MR. WOODWARD: The, the question is, what do you do now? And I, I mean, look, this whole thing may be not just going around Florida...

MR. GREGORY: Yeah.

MR. WOODWARD: ...but up the East Coast.

MR. GREGORY: And you just...

MR. WOODWARD: My God, it's going to come right here and destroy your set before, before the year is up.

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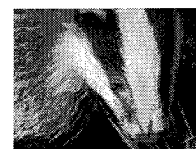
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Updated: Tue., May. 25, 2010, 1:23 AM

## Two more Census workers blow the whistle

By JOHN CRUDELE

Last Updated: 1:23 AM, May 25, 2010

Posted: 12:42 AM, May 25, 2010

You know the old saying: "Everyone loves a charade." Well, it seems that the Census Bureau may be playing games.

Last week, one of the millions of workers hired by Census 2010 to parade around the country counting Americans blew the whistle on some statistical tricks.

The worker, **Naomi Cohn**, told The Post that she was hired and fired a number of times by Census. Each time she was hired back, it seems, Census was able to report the creation of a new job to the Labor Department.

Below, I have a couple more readers who worked for Census 2010 and have tales to tell.

But first, this much we know.

Each month Census gives Labor a figure on the number of workers it has hired. That figure goes into the closely followed monthly employment report Labor provides. For the past two months the hiring by Census has made up a good portion of the new jobs.

Labor doesn't check the Census hiring figure or whether the jobs are actually new or recycled. It considers a new job to have been created if someone is hired to work at least one hour a month.

One hour! A month! So, if a worker is terminated after only one hour and another is hired in her place, then a second new job can apparently be reported to Labor. (I've been unable to get Census to explain this to me.)

Here's a note from a Census worker -- this one from Manhattan:

"John: I am on my fourth rehire with the 2010 Census.

"I have been hired, trained for a week, given a few hours of work, then laid off. So my unemployed self now counts for four new jobs.

"I have been paid more to train all four times than I have been paid to actually produce results. These are my tax dollars and your tax dollars at work.

"A few months ago I was trained for three days and offered five hours of work counting the homeless. Now, I am knocking (on) doors trying to find the people that have not returned their Census forms. I worked the 2000 Census. It was a far more organized venture.

"Have to run and meet my crew leader, even though with this rain I did not work today. So I can put in a pay sheet for the hour or hour and a half this meeting will take. Sincerely, **C.M.**"

And here's another:

"John: I worked for (Census) and I was paid \$18.75 (an hour) just like Ms. Naomi Cohn from your article.

"I worked for about six weeks or so and I picked the hours I wanted to work. I was checking the work of others. While I was classifying addresses, another junior supervisor was checking my work.

"In short, we had a "checkers checking checkers" quality control. I was eventually let go and was told all the work was finished when, in fact, other people were being trained for the same assignment(s).

"I was re-hired about eight months later and was informed that I would have to go through one week of additional training.

"On the third day of training, I got sick and visited my doctor. I called my supervisor and asked how I can make up the class. She informed me that I was 'terminated.' She elaborated that she had to terminate three other people for being five minutes late to class.

"I did get two days' pay and I am sure the 'late people' got paid also. I think you would concur that this is an expensive way to attempt to control sickness plus lateness. I am totally convinced that the Census work could be very easily done by the US Postal Service.

"When I was trying to look for an address or had a question about a building, I would ask the postman on the beat. They knew the history of the route and can expand in detail who moved in or out etc. I have found it interesting that if someone works one hour, they are included in the labor statistics as a new job being full.

"I am not surprised that you can't get any answers from Census staff; I found there were very few people who knew the big picture. **M.G.**"

When I received my Census form in the mail, I filled it out. Nobody had to knock on my door.

I answered truthfully about the number of people living in my household. But I could have just as easily doubled the number. Why not? Didn't Census advertisements imply that my community would get more federal money if the population were larger?

I'm glad people are finding work with the Census. For some it's the only work they have had this year and the chump



change they are making for a few hours' work is a godsend.

But wasting taxpayers' money on busywork isn't going to do much for the economy. *john.crudele@nypost.com*

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Posted on Tue, May. 25, 2010

## Ensure your community counts

BY DEAN CANNON and PERRY E. THURSTON JR.  
[www.sunshinecensus2010.com](http://www.sunshinecensus2010.com)

On July 10, less than two months from now, the 2010 Census will end its door-to-door counting of everyone in Florida. Conducted every 10 years, the census defines who we are as a nation. It guides critical decisions on the national, state and local levels and provides insight into population, state, local and tribal government funding and more. With the clock ticking, many state and local officials and community leaders are still working to ensure an accurate count for Florida. To help achieve this goal, the Florida House of Representatives recently launched [www.myfloridacensus.gov](http://www.myfloridacensus.gov).

All Florida residents are invited to [www.myfloridacensus.gov](http://www.myfloridacensus.gov) to share information about the impact of the census in their communities. In turn, we use [www.myfloridacensus.gov](http://www.myfloridacensus.gov) to work with the U.S. Census Bureau to account for streets, neighborhoods and communities that may otherwise be missed in the 2010 Census.

For example, after the 2000 Census, we found that new subdivisions and areas of construction were undercounted throughout the state. Based on new construction in unincorporated areas of East Orange County, some communities appear to have grown three to four times in size, over the last 10 years.

That kind of growth in one area can benefit the funding for all of Orange County. If just a few residents from East Orange County visit [www.myfloridacensus.gov](http://www.myfloridacensus.gov), we can help assure that all of Orange County is better represented in the census.

In fact, recent visitors to [www.myfloridacensus.gov](http://www.myfloridacensus.gov) illustrated that streets and neighborhoods in counties like Osceola, Nassau and Volusia were missed when census questionnaires were mailed in March and April. That feedback from just a few Floridians enabled us to communicate, on behalf of hundreds of their neighbors, to the Census Bureau.

If the census misses Florida residents, dollars and opportunities will be left on the table. After the 2000 Census, the U.S. Census Monitoring Board estimated that Miami-Dade County would lose at least \$100 million in federal funding due to undercounting, over the next decade. In fact, Miami-Dade and Broward ranked 5th and 19th amongst the most undercounted counties in the country.

Recent reports even suggest that Florida is considered one of five states that are perilously close to losing out on a congressional seat because of lackluster participation in the census. Overall, this translates into fewer services for Florida's families with the greatest needs, all of which puts a strain on state and local officials to do more with less.

Thankfully, we can help turn this situation around.

6/1/10

# Heated debate and lawsuits develop about redistricting amendments in Florida

From Ballotpedia

May 26, 2010

**TALLAHASSEE, Florida:** A total of three redistricting measures have been certified for the ballot and are scheduled to appear together in the November election. Citizen initiatives Amendment 5 and 6 will be followed by Amendment 7, a legislatively-referred measure. However, as of this week two lawsuits have been filed to block both Amendment 6 and 7 from the ballot.



On Friday, May 21 proponents of Amendment 5 and 6 filed a lawsuit to remove Amendment 7 from the statewide ballot. The suit was filed in the state Circuit Court in Tallahassee by Florida State Conference of the NAACP, the League of Women Voters, Democracia Ahora as well as former Republican comptroller Bob Milligan. "This is a trick amendment and it is a blatant effort to fool voters," said Deirdre Macnab, president of the League of Women Voters of Florida.<sup>[1]</sup> Initiative supporters argue that the legislatively-referred amendment is a "poison pill" specifically designed to divert Amendments 5 and 6. They argue that the ballot title and summary are misleading and is hiding the measure's "true purpose."<sup>[2]</sup>

Rep. Dean Cannon, a supporter of Amendment 7, argues that it isn't the legislative-referral that is misleading, Fair Districts Florida, sponsors of Amendment 5 and 6, is pushing "claims and promises" that they "could not deliver," he said. In a statement Cannon said Amendment 7 means exactly what is said and that the lawsuit is trying to argue "that the intent matters more than the plain meaning of the words."<sup>[1]</sup>

In a turn of events, on Monday, May 24 U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown and Mario Diaz-Balart filed a lawsuit against Amendment 6 in Leon County Circuit Court. Balart said, "Amendment 6 is riddled with inconsistencies and, if passed, would set unworkable standards in drawing districts." Both U.S. Representatives had previously testified against Amendment 6. Ellen Freidin, Fair Districts Florida chairwoman - sponsors of Amendment 5 and 6, said the lawsuit by the congressional members was aimed at "playing games." Amendment 5, also a proposed redistricting measure, is not directly cited in the lawsuit. Freidin added, "They clearly haven't read the language of our amendments. We specifically have addressed their concerns."<sup>[3]</sup> But both Brown and Diaz-Balart argue that Amendment 6 is not only misleading but would dilute minority voting powers in the state.<sup>[4]</sup>

## See also

- Florida 2010 ballot measures
- Florida Congressional District Boundaries, Amendment 6 (2010)
- Florida Redistricting, Amendment 7 (2010)



## References

- <sup>1.0</sup> <sup>1.1</sup> ↑ *The Herald Tribune*, "Groups file suit on redistricting ballot measure," May 22, 2010
- ↑ *Associated Press*, "Court asked to take Amendment 7 off Fla. ballot," May 21, 2010
- ↑ *Sunshine State News*, "U.S. Reps Sue to Block Redistricting Amendment," May 26, 2010
- ↑ *The Florida Times-Union*, "Jacksonville Journal: Brown sues over Amendment 6," May 25, 2010

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"[http://www.ballotpedia.org/wiki/index.php/Heated\\_debate\\_and\\_lawsuits\\_develop\\_about\\_redistricting\\_amendments\\_in\\_Florida](http://www.ballotpedia.org/wiki/index.php/Heated_debate_and_lawsuits_develop_about_redistricting_amendments_in_Florida)"

Categories: Florida 2010 news | 2010 ballot news | May 2010 | Ballot lawsuit news

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## Census clock ticking

By DEAN CANNON and PERRY THURSTON

Special To the Tampa Tribune

On July 10 the 2010 Census will end its door-to-door counting of everyone in Florida. Conducted every 10 years, the census defines who we are as a nation. It guides critical decisions on the national, state and local levels and provides insight into population, state, local and tribal government funding and more.

With the clock ticking, many state and local officials and community leaders are still working to ensure an accurate count for Florida. To help achieve this goal, the Florida House of Representatives recently launched [www.myfloridacensus.gov](http://www.myfloridacensus.gov).

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For example, after the 2000 census, we found that new subdivisions and areas of construction were undercounted throughout the state.

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In fact, recent visitors to [www.myfloridacensus.gov](http://www.myfloridacensus.gov) illustrated that streets and neighborhoods in counties like Osceola, Nassau and Volusia were missed when census questionnaires were mailed in March and April. If the census misses Florida residents, dollars and opportunities will be left on the table. Recent reports even suggest that Florida is considered one of five states that are perilously close to losing out on a congressional seat because of lackluster participation in the census. Overall, this translates into fewer services for Florida's families with the greatest needs, all of which puts a strain on state and local officials to do more with less.

Thankfully, we can help turn this situation around. First, if you or someone you know has yet to answer the census questionnaire, either mail it back as soon as possible or contact the Census Bureau directly at 1-866-872-6868 if you have not received the questionnaire. Your efforts can make a difference for your community.

Communities in Broward, Collier, Hillsborough, Lee, Miami-Dade and Gadsden counties have unique challenges in accounting for immigrant and transient residents. Yet, every community can be represented with the help of individuals who simply encourage friends, family, church members and others to take just a few minutes to respond when a census worker visits their home or requests a time to visit in the future.

Last, please consider visiting [www.myfloridacensus.gov](http://www.myfloridacensus.gov) and tell us whether the census contacted you via mail, phone or door-to-door. Every 10 years, Florida gets one chance to take a picture of your community. That snapshot determines 10 years worth of investments in the future of your area schools, hospitals, emergency services and so much more. By visiting [www.myfloridacensus.gov](http://www.myfloridacensus.gov), you can help make sure that everyone in your community is represented in Florida's portrait.

# Florida Employs Crowds in the Cloud for Clear Census Results



krisbock@microsoft.com 26 May 2010 9:10 AM

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By **Kristin Bockius**, State & Local Government Social Media Marketing Manager

Who said "necessity is the mother of invention?" Apparently, it was someone in Florida. Introducing, **MyFloridaCensus.gov**.



Nationwide, as federal census workers go door-to-door counting heads, state and local government officials are also scrambling to ensure a complete count of their residents. Frankly, states are competing with each other. An average of \$1,500 per person in annual federal funding is on the line, and for Florida, an additional seat in Congress could be at stake. As a result, many cash-strapped states have implemented programs that combine old-fashioned grassroots efforts with the latest technological innovations to make sure everyone is counted.

The Florida House of Representatives is teaming with Microsoft in this endeavor, and the partnership is producing results for both the present and possibly new approaches to public service in the future. Today, the Florida House's **MyFloridaCensus.gov** seeks to account for individuals, streets, neighborhoods and entire communities that may go uncounted in the 2010 Census.

**MyFloridaCensus.gov** is hosted in Microsoft's **Windows Azure** cloud platform and runs using Microsoft **Silverlight** for cross-browser compatibility. Visitors to **MyFloridaCensus.gov** first answer a simple question—"Has the census contacted you yet?" Using the **Bing Maps** interface, visitors can then enter the site's mapping application to compare their response with the thousands of others who have already visited the site.

Using a "crowdsourcing" approach, both government officials and private citizens can use this visual display to give and receive more precise feedback about communities that may be missed in the census. Overall, the technology is offering the public more than just a hub for information. **MyFloridaCensus.gov** is offering the public a way to participate in the gathering and use of that information.

**MyFloridaCensus.gov** is also a great example of how government can take massive amounts data, organize that data visually, and then give people the means to interact with that data. Fortunately, the Florida House is also providing a new framework that can help other state and local governments and grassroots organizations with similar outreach efforts and public services. For more information about the development of **MyFloridaCensus.gov**, click [here](#).

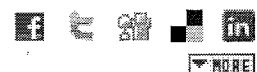
Note, July 11 is the last day of the 2010 Census. If you live in Florida, log on to **MyFloridaCensus.gov** before it is too late!

Technorati Tags: **Microsoft, Government, Florida, Census, Azure, Bing Maps, Silverlight**

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Printed on page A15

## Make Sure Census Reaches All of Fla.

By DEAN CANNON  
& PERRY THURSTON

Published: Friday, May 28, 2010 at 12:01 a.m.

On July 10, less than two months from now, the 2010 Census will end its door-to-door counting of everyone in Florida. Conducted every 10 years, the census defines who we are as a nation. It guides critical decisions on the national, state and local levels, and provides insight into population; state-, local- and tribal-government funding; and more.

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For example, after the 2000 Census, we found that new subdivisions and areas of construction were undercounted throughout the state. Based on new construction in unincorporated areas of East Orange County, some communities appear to have grown three to four times in size over the last 10 years. That kind of growth in one area can benefit the funding for all of Orange County. If just a few residents from East Orange County visit [www.myfloridacensus.gov](http://www.myfloridacensus.gov), we can help assure that all of Orange County is better represented in the census.

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Recent reports even suggest that Florida is considered one of five states that is perilously close to losing out on a congressional seat because of lackluster participation in the census. Overall, this translates into fewer services for Florida's families with the greatest needs, all of which puts a strain on state and local officials to do more with less.

Thankfully, we can help turn this situation around. First, if you or someone you know has yet to answer the census questionnaire, either mail it back as soon as possible, or contact the Census Bureau directly toll-free at 866-872-6868 if you have not received the questionnaire. In many cases, you can complete the questions over the phone.



Second, please know that your efforts can make a difference for your entire community. For instance, certain hard-to-count neighborhoods in Broward County have shown improvement when they were "blitzed" by teams of volunteers and census workers. The Wilton Manors community has already surpassed its census count from 2000, with the help of its "complete count committee," a grass-roots coalition of local leaders and volunteers.

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Communities in Broward, Collier, Hillsborough, Lee, Miami-Dade and even Gadsden counties have unique challenges in accounting for immigrant and transient residents. Yet, every community can be represented with the help of individuals who simply encourage friends, family, church members, and others to take just a few minutes to respond when a census worker visits their home or requests a time to visit in the future.

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For additional information on the census in your community, you can also visit [www.2010.census.gov/2010census](http://www.2010.census.gov/2010census).

[ State Rep. Dean Cannon is a Republican from Winter Park. State Rep. Perry Thurston is a Democrat from Plantation. ]

This story appeared in print on page A15

Braindroppings it's what you learn after you know it all that counts

5/30/10

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## Fair Districts Amendment

By  
patty

Published: May 30, 2010 Posted in: Braindroppings, Education, Politics Tags: amendments, constitutional amendments, florida, gerrymander



Once again, Florida politicians are spitting in the faces of the electorate. For you Dear Readers who have never been residents of the Sunshine State, I need to clarify something that is very weird about politics here. Essentially, our Legislators don't legislate; they play games to consolidate and keep their power. As a result, not many laws get passed that are significant. The people in Florida sooner or later get tired of this and petition to get CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS on the ballot. Yes, we amend the Florida Constitution on a regular basis, usually because we can't get the people in Tallahassee to do their jobs.

OK – so this year, the ballot has 10 (TEN) amendments. I am going to give you a link to an editorial about 3 of them, and I want to say a few words about them as well. Amendments 5 and 6 are citizen initiatives – designed to force our state and federal districts to be redrawn in a simple and straightforward manner (think Iowa). Since the census was taken this year, the redrawing will happen after all the counting etc is finished. To prevent the gerrymandering from continuing, citizens signed petitions to get Fair Districts on the ballot. Amendment 5 is for state districts, 6 is for federal representation.

Our esteemed Legislature, ever trying to keep their jobs, pushed a Legislative initiated amendment onto the ballot in the last hours of their session this past May. Their sleight-of-hand, called Amendment 7, if passed, would nullify 5 and 6. So now the push is to inform voters that voting yes for all of them is just keeping the same old system in place – vote YES on 5 and 6, NO on 7.

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/opinion/os-ed-districts-053010-20100528,0,2410849.story>

### About the Author

patricia has lived in central florida for twenty years, coming from the northeast and mid-atlantic area. she enjoys tai chi, volunteering, cooking, playing guitar and reading, among other things.

1 Comment

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No good deed goes unpunished. I was shopping at a 'national discount chain store' and realized that I was really hungry – I had a small breakfast and it was now long past lunch. The smell of the hot dogs on the roller grill was enticing – so I went into the 'food court' and [...]

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