



IT'S IN OUR HANDS

Accurate census critical to parish and state getting fair share of federal dollars, representation

By Helen Wale Turner

The 2010 Census Livingston Parish Complete Count Committee has only one goal: for all residents to mail back the 10-question census form by April 1, 2010. Why? Because the mail-backs are directly tied to how much Livingston Parish and Louisiana will receive of more than \$300 billion distributed annually over the next 10 years.

That distribution comes to us in the form of services, assistance, monies, grants, and how many of the 435 seats we get in America's government.

The 10-question, 10-minute form is the shortest in census history. Some households may also receive the American Community Survey, which collects more detailed socioeconomic

information, and both should be completed.

The main reason voiced by residents for not wanting to complete the form is the concern of private information being exposed. Have no fear! Under Title 13 of the United States Code, it is a felony for any Census Bureau employee to disclose, in their lifetime, any of the information gathered to anyone other than the resident - and that includes law enforcement, IRS, military, public officials or any government agency; nobody gets your information. The penalty for disclosure is five years in prison and/or a fine of \$250,000. Title 44 mandates the information remains confidential for 72 years. The Bureau says that information given on credit card apps, hotel registrations and in the doctor's office is more personal and critical than what is on the census form.

By law, the Census Bureau must deliver a report of population counts to the President of the United States within nine months of Census Day. This report will provide the population counts which determine the number of seats

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Our parish's Complete Count Committee was formed early in 2009, chaired by Mona Mistic of Women Outreaching Women and Sharon Martin, Director of the Council on Aging. That committee consists of local "Census Points of Contact" and other designated municipal representatives, as well as volunteers from business, educational, community services, faith-based, government and rural sectors who have been brainstorming ways to promote the 2010 Census.

Among those named to the Livingston Parish Census Community Committee were DeeDee DeLatte of the Parish Permit Office; Annie Fugler, Denham Springs City Councilwoman and a Census Point of Contact; Thomas Cothorn, Asst. Superintendent of Public Schools; Marie Kreutzer, Town of Springfield; and Lorena McGee, Springfield. DeLatte and Fugler will chair the committee, with assistance from Thomas Raymond, Partnership Assistant from the Dallas Regional Census Center. Regional technical advisor is Muriel Laws of Walker, formerly of Wash., D.C., but the daily management responsibilities rest with local community leaders.

each state will have in the U.S. House of Representatives. If not enough of us mail back the form, we will all suffer; Livingston Parish and Louisiana could lose money and services to other states, and redistricting lines could be drawn based on under-counted residents which would cause us to lose a representative in Congress at a time when every vote in Congress is critical.

At stake are such necessary everyday elements as roads and infrastructure, housing assistance,

rehabilitation loans, education, healthcare, transportation, social services, emergency response and taking care of those with disabilities, the elderly and children, just to name a few.

Livingston Parish is being asked to plan ahead to assure that everyone is counted. Students living away from home, those who speak little or no English, immigrants and people displaced by disasters are often not counted, and their inclusion greatly matters.

Census-taking jobs available

Applications for 2,000-2,500 jobs for census takers in this area are now being accepted by the Census Bureau. Those speaking Spanish or Vietnamese will be the only applicants receiving preference due to the critical need for counters fluent in those languages. Otherwise, no special consideration is allowed one applicant over another. Applicants are computerized by number and region, and selection is random, based on areas of need.



About 60-80 clerks and 1,500-2,000 enumerators are needed for full and part-time work at \$9-15 an hour, depending on experience. Workers will be based out of the Ponchatoula office but will actually work from home. Practice tests are online and testing is done 5-6 days a week. The test has 28 questions and takes about 30 minutes to complete, but applicants should allow two hours for application completion. The number to call for job information is (866) 861-2010. For more information, go to www.2010censusjobs.gov.



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