

STAND UP AND BE COUNTED.
The 2010 Census is Your Opportunity ...
by Vic Berecz

Recently one of my neighbors “posted” in the elevator a one-page warning about the 2010 Census, ostensibly from the Better Business Bureau. Unlike most people, I went to the BBB website to see if this posting was actually there. The BBB warning I found consisted of a set of common-sense precautions like “check census-takers IDs” ... the very same words found in the elevator. But, a few sentences had been added to the elevator posting in boldface caps. That’s what pissed me off ... not only did the insertions misrepresent the BBB, but they promulgated untruths (about our legal obligations to answer Census questions) and added racial fear-mongering (allusions to ACORN’s participation in the Census) to the mix. To the perpetrators of this and similar political frauds, I say: **Stop hiding behind anonymously posted lies!** To those who are willing to listen to reason, I say:

Stand up and be counted ... you should be proud to participate. I’m proud to stand up and be counted as an American. My grandmother (who never became an American citizen) was proud to stand up and be counted as an American resident during eight US Censuses. It’s not burdensome to answer ten simple and rather innocuous questions. There’s no *down-side* for anyone. The “long form” that troubled a small percentage of Census respondents in the past is no longer in use. If you answer all the questions to the best of your ability and mail in your form, you won’t even be bothered by a personal visit from a census taker. Make life easy for yourself, and save your government (really, you the taxpayer) a few bucks, stand up and be counted by mail!

Stand up and be counted ... your privacy is not being violated. As you know, I don’t put a lot of stock in privacy ... I don’t think it should be necessary (especially with respect to the innocuous questions on the 2010 Census), and as a people we’ve repeatedly made the choice of *technological advancement* over our *expectation of privacy*. But, even if you disagree with me on the subject of privacy, why are you worried about the Census? Since the first census in 1790, the privacy of individual census returns has been sacrosanct for 72 years. That is the law. It is also the law that all personal information (eg, names) is kept completely separate from information used for statistical purposes.

Stand up and be counted ... it’s good for our nation. The principal purpose of the Census is the Constitutional mandate to base Congressional apportionment on it. But, beyond this headcount aspect of the Census, the other questions help ensure the equitable distribution of funds and services that are mandated by law. That’s a good thing. The Census helps make sure that some of our tax dollars are spent wisely and properly.

Stand up and be counted ... in the right place. I am legally a Florida resident, though I spend considerable time each year in two other states ... North Carolina and Connecticut. So I will choose to be counted in Florida and properly so since Florida is where I spend “most of the time” A national census spokesperson gives that and “where they consider home” as the criteria for choosing where to file in the case of people with more than one residence (referred to down here as *snowbirds*). Here in Lee County, Florida, 54% of all homes are seasonal, and in nearby Collier County even more (73%) are seasonal. Unfortunately, and unfairly, there is an effort on the part of some Florida officials to garner more population than this State deserves, and the federal benefits attached to it, by encouraging seasonal visitors to fill out census forms from their

temporary Florida addresses. If you're elsewhere ten or eleven months of the year, using the infrastructure and services, why should Florida benefit from your headcount? Don't let that happen.

Stand up and be counted ... your great-grandchildren will thank you. As already noted, your 2010 Census return will become publicly available in 2082. Perhaps your great-grandchildren will gain a bit of insight into their heritage by perusing those returns. I firmly believe in Nelson DeMille's comment in *The Gate House*: "The past is prologue to the future, and short of a meteor strike and mass extinction, the dramas of each generation roll on into the next." Let your great-grandchildren get to know you ...

... stand up and be counted.

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