

On the Brink of the Count

National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Annual
Conference
Hollywood, California
June 26, 2009

(Slide 1)

I am very honored to be here today. Secretary Locke regrets that his schedule did not permit his participation, but his loss is my gain. As you know, NALEO is one of our most important Partnership organizations for the 2010 Census. I appreciate all the work that you have done and all the work that you will do to help ensure a complete and accurate 2010 Census. Your theme is well informed for we are indeed on the “brink of the count” with only 279 days until April 1, 2010, Census Day.

I have only been in my job officially for 17 days, but I want to assure you that I am not new to the issues affecting your communities, nor new to the challenges of gathering accurate data and knowing how that data affects daily lives.

I took the job of Under Secretary for Economic Affairs because it provided an opportunity to oversee and work with the two premier data agencies in the U.S. government, the Census Bureau and the BEA. The biggest challenge and the greatest accomplishment will be working to make sure that the 2010 Census is the best Census that we can produce.

Magnitude

The 2010 Census will be the largest peacetime activity every undertaken by the Federal government.

(Slide 2)

Imagine the size of this task...counting every person in the U.S.

- Since 1790, the population of the United States has grown from just under 4 million residents to over 300 million. That means we have to get responses back from the people in about 145 million residences in 2010.

- In order to get the job done we will hire 1.4 million people to carry out the operations, print more than 60 million maps, and lease over 4 million square feet of office space. This is not only good for the Census, but it's good for the economy as well right now.

Much of the planning and preparation is complete, but more remains to be done.

- The Census Bureau has nearly completed its address canvassing operation which required that addresses on every street and road in the country be visited and verified. This operation employed more than 140,000 people. This operation ensures the Census Bureau knows where to send your form.
- The Census Bureau will lease space for Census offices in nearly 500 local communities. These offices will hire and train people to be enumerators, and will serve as the organizing location for partnership and outreach activities.

Why We Do This

The Constitution requires an enumeration of the population and people are required to respond. But the Census is not just a civic responsibility, it is a civic opportunity. It is

- an opportunity to be represented;
- an opportunity to bring resources to your community; and
- an opportunity to be a part of the fabric and portrait of America in the year 2010.

The Census Bureau understands that an *accurate* Census is a *fair* Census: meaning, a Census where everybody has the opportunity to be counted.

(Slide 3)

I want to give you a short history lesson on how the opportunity for full participation of the Hispanic and Latino community has evolved. In 1790 when the first Census was held, U.S. Marshalls visited every dwelling they could find to count the number of people living there. They did not ask about Hispanic origin.

(Slide 4)

Neither did the 1890 Census or any census for more than 180 years.

(Slide 5)

In 1970, there was a question about Hispanic origin but it was only asked of a five percent sample of the population. In 1980, for the first time, the Census Bureau provided the opportunity for all residents of the United States to identify their ethnic origin as Hispanic.

Today, thankfully, U.S. Marshalls do not conduct the census and for the first time ever, a bilingual English questionnaire will be made available.

(Slide 6)

The bilingual form will be mailed to about 13 million households in neighborhoods where there are high concentrations of Spanish speakers. In other areas, it will be readily available to be picked up in nearby locations (such as libraries) or it will be available upon request over the phone.

Expand the Opportunity

In the 2010 Census, we want to expand the opportunity for those who have not been counted in the past. We want a fair Census, as well as an accurate Census – a Census in which everybody has an equal chance to be counted and to respond.

The Census itself proceeds in a two-step process.

- First, everybody is mailed a form and asked to send it back. The more people who mail back their response, the less government money is spent on the Census. The best way you can save taxpayer dollars is to encourage people to mail their forms.
- Second, we know not everybody will return their forms by mail and that's why we're hiring people to knock on the doors of those who don't return their form. Census wants to improve cooperation with the people who come to your door when you haven't mailed the form back, thereby reducing the number of those previously missed in the Census and reducing the undercount.

What We are Doing

Census is implementing a comprehensive and integrated communications strategy to improve response rates to the mail-in questionnaire and to increase cooperation with enumerators at the door.

First, we are identifying local organizations to partner with through out the country. This is particularly important for those of you who serve the Hispanic community. We need you to help the Census Bureau carry the message that the Census is important, that is easy to respond, and it's safe to respond.

- It's easy: 10 questions on the questionnaire, taking about 10 minutes to complete.
- It's safe: Census information is protected by law and not shared with any other Federal agency-ever. That means no FBI, no IRS and no immigration authorities.
- This is an important message. Those of you in elected positions know your communities, your constituents trust you, and they need to hear from you that the Census is safe.

Second, the Census Bureau has hired more than 2700 partnership specialists and assistants---

- That's 4 times the number hired in 2000—
- Their role is to assist local and state government leaders, churches and community-based organizations with materials, information and public events promoting participation in the Census.

Third, we are developing an advertising campaign that targets those who are hard to count.

- More than \$27 million in local media buys will provide Spanish language advertising on television, radio, in magazines, newspapers and on the internet. Many other English-language ads will target the Hispanic community as well.
- In all, we will produce advertisements in 28 different languages.
- Through the Census in Schools program, education materials in English and Spanish will be provided for grades K-12 so that our children can bring the message of the opportunity home to their parents.

Fourth, the Census Bureau will staff neighborhood questionnaire assistance centers with locally hired staff, who speak the language and can help residents fill out their forms. You will also be able to have your answers taken over the phone in Spanish on toll-free numbers.

Our goal is to make our advertisements and personal contacts as effective as possible. The person who comes to your door when you do not mail your questionnaire back, in many cases, will be someone who speaks your language, who lives in your neighborhood, or attends your church or soccer games.

Why I Came

I want those of you who are part of NALEO to know how very much your partnership means to the Census Bureau and to the country.

I also want to congratulate you on your ground-breaking campaign to reach every Hispanic household with the message that the Census is safe, and it is easy. Your vision and willingness to partner with the Census Bureau, create a new program where none existed is public service at its finest.

Your trusted voice is needed to open doors, and to motivate the Hispanic community to be fully counted---to not miss this civic opportunity.

(Slide 1)

The success of the Census is **In Our Hands**. It is up to each and every one of us to respond, and to encourage and to ensure that our families, friends, and neighbors respond as well.

Or, as you say in your campaign: *ya es hora !HAGASE CONTAR!* Its time to make your voices count!

Thank you