

IF MICHIGAN SNOWBIRDS RECEIVE THEIR 2010 CENSUS FORMS AT THEIR SOUTHERN RESIDENCES IN FEBRUARY AND MARCH OF 2010 – WILL THEY KNOW TO INDICATE MICHIGAN IS THEIR PRIMARY RESIDENCE?

SNOWBIRDS COULD COST MICHIGAN MILLIONS IN LOST REVENUE IF THIS RETIREE POPULATION IS NOT COUNTED PROPERLY IN THE 2010 CENSUS

AREA AGENCY ON AGING 1-B RECOMMENDS A CAMPAIGN BE INITIATED TO EDUCATE SNOWBIRDS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF REPORTING MICHIGAN AS THEIR PERMANENT RESIDENCE

In February and March of 2010, the Census Bureau will send the 2010 decennial census forms to the nation's residences, asking citizens to complete and return the forms. Millions of these forms will be sent to second homes that will be occupied by retirees from northern states, who migrate seasonally and are still wintering in their temporary southern residence. The timing of this count will lead many retirees to complete and return the census form they receive at this southern residence. This action will result in them being counted as a southern state resident, even though they may reside in a permanent residence in a northern state more than six months each year.

Michigan has many snowbirds, residents who maintain a permanent residence in Michigan, but spend all or part of the winter months in a second residence or temporary lodging in a southern state. When Michigan snowbirds are counted in a southern state, Michigan loses billions of dollars in federal funds because funding is distributed annually to states based on their population. Individual communities also lose, because millions of state and federal funds are distributed to local governments based on their population.

A Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program Study showed that:

- Federal domestic assistance funding allocated to states on the basis of statistics based on the decennial census population count totaled \$376 billion in 2007
- Michigan received a per capita census-adjusted allocation of \$1,071 per resident in 2007 – this amount represents what is lost when a Michigan snowbird identifies another state as their residence.
- In 2009, each Michigan resident age 60 and older attracted approximately \$20.33 in federal Title III Older Americans Act funds

- If just one Michigan snowbird from each county reports Michigan as their home instead of a southern residence, it will be worth \$880,930 for Michigan public services over the ten year life of the decennial census data, and over \$16,876 in Older Americans Act Title III funds over the next decade.

MICHIGAN HAS A LOT AT STAKE IN HOW SNOWBIRDS ARE COUNTED IN THE 2010 CENSUS

The Area Agency on Aging 1-B recommends that a coordinated, collaborative effort be undertaken to educate Michigan Snowbirds about the importance of reporting Michigan as their normal residence. This campaign should include multiple aging network organizations including area agencies on aging and senior centers, Census Complete Count committees, and state and public officials. Campaign activities should include a public education campaign, media/communications, community outreach, research, special events, and organizing. Such a campaign should be implemented in the fall of 2009, before snowbirds leave Michigan, and continue through the Census Day on April 2010. Foundation or other funding should be sought to finance campaign activities, develop messages and materials, and mobilize statewide action.

BACKGROUND

The U.S. Constitution requires that all residents (including non-citizens and undocumented immigrants) be counted every ten years through a labor intensive, nationwide census. The census is essential to ensuring all Americans are represented in our democracy and well served by it. Yet due to delays in planning during the past several years and an inadequate level of funding, it is anticipated that federal implementation of the 2010 census will be highly problematic. The federal Government Accountability Office has identified the 2010 Census as one of a handful of “high-risk” immediate challenges facing the Obama Administration. To this end, state and local efforts to ensure full accounting of residents, including a proper accounting for seasonal population migrants such as Snowbirds, are deemed critical for the following reasons:

- **The census affects federal and state funding.** Nationally, the census helps determine the distribution to state and local governments of roughly \$400 billion a year in federal funds – or \$4 trillion over a ten-year period. Michigan alone receives more than \$10 billion annually in federal funds allocated on the basis of the census, about \$1,070 for each individual. Census experts estimate that for every person not counted in 2010, local government will lose \$12,000 during the next ten years in federal funding alone; in other words, every 1,000 additional people counted would mean \$12 million more in federal funding for the area. Millions in additional state funds are also allocated on the basis of census counts.
- **The census affects community and economic planning.** Census data is used as a guide by both government and private sector planners to make important decisions such as where to build new roads, schools, and businesses; provide services for the elderly; locate job training centers; and more.

- **The census affects Michigan's voice in the federal government.** The census determines how many seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives and influences how congressional and legislative districts are drawn. Population projections indicate that Michigan could lose another congressional seat after the 2010 census due to national population shifts.
- **The census affects civil rights enforcement.** Census data are used to monitor and enforce compliance with civil rights laws in employment, housing, voting, lending and education.

There is indirect evidence from the American Community Survey , the new census counting method that depends on sample surveys, that suggests the census counts too few people from northern states and too many people in southern states. Michigan State Demographer Ken Darga has published an analysis of decennial census and American Community survey data which provides evidence of an undercount in northern states. He hypothesizes "that many seasonal residents were counted at the locations where they received census forms in March or April, even if they spent a larger part of the year at a different residence." His analysis of the Average American Community Survey Coverage Rate indicated "The north/south pattern found in maps suggests very strongly that the census-based population estimates, as well as the 2000 Census itself, tend to count a substantial number of seasonal migrants in the Sunbelt rather than at their usual residences."

Specific data on the size and nature of Michigan's snowbird population is not collected or available. However research on seasonal migration in southern states does provide some clues. A 2006 study by University of Florida Bureau of Economic and Business Research Director Stan Smith found that Florida's elderly population fluctuated by nearly 20 percent annually due to seasonal migration. In the winter 2005 season, an estimated 818,000 Snowbirds left their home states for Florida, and more than 72% spent more than three months at their secondary residence. 38% of the snowbirds surveyed were from Midwest states and nearly 83% came to Florida because of the weather

Florida snowbirds were older and healthier than permanent Florida residents, and 63% rated their health as "very good" or "excellent". Three-fourths were married, and 94% were white.

CENSUS DOES NOT PROVIDE DIRECTION

Snowbirds with a primary and secondary residence will receive a census form at both residences in 2010. Unfortunately, the Census will provide no instruction on how to complete their form, or which form to complete. Citizens are expected to complete only one census form, and indicate that the form sent to their secondary residence is not their usual residence where they live for a majority of the year. It is unknown how frequently residents properly identify their home state as their regular residence, or how often snowbirds complete both census forms and are double counted.

EFFORTS ARE MOBILIZING TO GET A COMPLETE CENSUS COUNT, BUT SNOWBIRDS ARE UNDER THE RADAR

The Census Bureau is leading an effort to mobilize community stakeholders to participate in the effort to assure everyone is accurately counted, with targeted activities to reach hard-to-count groups like the homeless, minorities, immigrants, and communities with historically low census form return rates.

Unfortunately, hard-to-count older adult populations, such as snowbirds, and disabled older adults who have been taken in into the home of a caregiver, are not mentioned among these populations. A third population of concern, grandparents who are raising their grandchildren, are also not being targeted by these efforts.

A CALL TO ACTION

Michigan is already a donor state when measured by the ratio of federal taxes paid to federal funds that return to Michigan through allocations. A recent Citizens Research Council report found that in 2007, Michigan ranked 45th out of 50 states in the share of federal funds received per capita. Michigan has 3.3 % of the nation's population, but only receives 2.8% of federal expenditures. Michigan would have received \$48 billion more if the state received its fair share.

A coalition of Chicago-area foundations have committed \$1 million to the **Count Me In** initiative, which will assist local Illinois nonprofit organizations to increase the decennial census form return rate in its major cities. Michigan funders should follow this example, and fund a modest effort to launch a public education campaign with the goal of educating snowbirds about the importance of reporting their Michigan home as their primary residence. The campaign would provide educational messaging, materials, and outreach to snowbirds working in collaboration with Census Count Committees, elected officials, senior organizations, media, and other stakeholders. Specific campaign objectives might include, but not be limited to:

- Organize a coalition of stakeholder groups to develop and implement a statewide community education and outreach campaign
- Develop key messages on the importance to Michigan of being counted as a Michigan resident for Census 2010
- Develop instructional messages on ways for snowbirds to assure they are counted as a Michigan resident, and not as a resident in the state of their secondary home

WHY ARE COMMUNITY-BASED AND SOCIAL SERVICE GROUPS SO IMPORTANT TO THE 2010 CENSUS?

More than 14,000 organizations supported Census 2000, including community-based organizations, state and local governments, faith-based organizations, schools, media, businesses, and others. Through partnerships, the Census Bureau has a far greater chance to reach every U.S. resident than by attempting this monumental task alone.

2010 Census:

Frequently Asked Questions

- Develop and disseminate educational materials to elected officials, Census Count Committees, media, senior organizations, and other stakeholders, that can convey the educational messages to older adults
- Secure earned media coverage for the community education campaign
- Conduct outreach activities targeted to older adult groups

Prepared by

Area Agency on Aging 1-B
29100 Northwestern Highway, Suite 400
Southfield, Michigan 48034

Contact:

Jim McGuire

Director of Research, Policy Development and Advocacy

(248) 262-9216

jmcguire@aaa1b.com