

Clarion Ledger article – Sunday, April 30

Many of us believe more funds should be allocated to our state to support such things as education, programs for the elderly, programs for children or road and bridge construction projects. Federal officials use census information to determine how to allocate more than \$200 billion of federal funds available each year. By completing your census form, you help yourself, your family, your community and your state.

Census information is used in determining how federal funds will be distributed for a variety of programs and projects that directly affect the people of Mississippi. Other states will receive Mississippi's share of federal funds if we do not do all that we can to access that money for our state.

The census data you provide is grouped with that of others in the community to help agencies distribute federal funding in the future and to set political boundaries and districts. Private industry can also make important uses of the data. A census-developed community profile can show that a town has the workforce and potential to expand, which is what companies look for when they locate in a community.

Every community in Mississippi is working hard to promote economic development. New businesses mean more money. Businesses that are considering relocating or moving to Mississippi, study census information when deciding where they will build new industrial sites and distribution centers. Census information is also used to understand consumer needs. By studying economic trends in the community, businesses can offer products that suit the needs of the people living in a community.

During the 1990 Census, 2.5 million people were counted in Mississippi. However, at least 54,000 people were not counted and 35,000 of those were children. This undercount hurt Mississippians because we did not get all of the federal funding we deserved and needed. Incomplete information also hurts your community, county and state because it distorts population projections of an area. A more complete census count will help Mississippi receive federal aid, money for support programs, and money for education. In addition, it will provide more complete demographic information.

Equally important is Mississippi's representation in Washington, which is directly affected by the results of the Census. People have been estimating for months that Mississippi may lose a seat in the U. S. House of Representatives. If Mississippi is undercounted, we will lose a seat, and thus lose a person who can speak and vote on behalf of the people of Mississippi.

This past Thursday, the non-response phase of the Census began in Mississippi. That means that census takers will begin door-to-door visits of those people who have not received a census questionnaire or did not mail back their form. I hope that everyone will cooperate with the census takers by taking a few minutes to answer their questions.

Please be assured that the answers you give Census takers are kept confidential. Census officials must protect your privacy. It is the law.

The Census helps the people of Mississippi in so many ways. I urge all Mississippians to step forward and be counted.