

Census Bureau Takes Its Show on the Road

Local News

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Posted on : January 5, 2010 at 5:43 am

SEATTLE - Washingtonians are being asked to stand up and be counted, as part of the 2010 national census. This week, the U.S. Bureau of the Census launches regional Road Tours around the country to acquaint people with what will be asked on the census forms, and why.

Each regional tour is a large, interactive exhibit that explains each of the ten questions on the standard census form. It will show up at local festivals and sports events, and in areas where the census response has been low in the past. Nationally, the tour is called the "2010 Census Portrait of America."

Actual census forms will be mailed out in mid-March. Information and Census Road Tour itineraries are at www.2010census.gov

Mary Watts, tour producer for the Pacific Northwest, says getting an accurate count is critical to apportion seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, but also for federal funding of social services, schools and hospitals.

"Each year now, there are about \$400 billion that will be redistributed to communities based on the population that is tabulated by the census data, and that will be used for the next ten years."

The more forms that are returned by mail, the less need for door-to-door census-takers. In 2000, about 65 percent of the forms were mailed in; Watts says they want to improve on that number this year.

"Right now, we have a goal of 70 percent; we would love for it to be higher. For every one percent increase in our mail response rate, we save taxpayers about \$85 million."

Watts says the tour includes a chance for people to record their pictures and the reasons they'll be filling out their census forms, which will be shared on a national Web page and social networking sites.