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Draft 3/31/00 9:40 am
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Census -
Radio Address

PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
RADIO ADDRESS ON CENSUS 2000
April 1, 2000

Good morning. Today, I want to speak with you about an opportunity to shape the future of our country and a responsibility we all have to make our voices count. I want to talk about this year's census and the importance of filling out and sending in your census form right away.

The Constitution mandates that our nation conduct a census every ten years. The first was taken back in 1790 and was directed by Thomas Jefferson when he served as Secretary of State. Every decade since then, the census has helped tell the story of America—who we are as a nation and what we are becoming. Census 2000 is our chance to write the latest chapter of the unfolding epic of America.

Even though the census is taken only once in a decade, it has an impact on our lives every day. A report I am releasing today by the Council of Economic Advisers shows just how important it is. **We need the census to help decide** how almost \$200 billion in federal funds will be invested in states and communities. **We need the census to draw** legislative district lines and **allocate** seats for each state in the U.S. House of Representatives. **We need the census to help our** hometowns determine where to build everything from roads to schools to hospitals to child care centers. **We need the census to help** businesses make decisions about where to invest and **help** individuals make **informed [cutpersonal]** decisions about where to buy a home or take a job.

For all these reasons, it is important to make sure the first census of the 21st century is fair, accurate and complete. After all, if we want to make good decisions about where we need to go as a nation, we first have to know where we are.

In the last census, we didn't know where more than 8 million people were. They were left uncounted--many of them were children, minorities and low-income families. When people are uncounted, their voices are unheard—in the halls of Congress and in their own communities. To those who suggest that filling out your census form isn't essential, it is. An inaccurate census distorts our understanding of a community's needs, denies people their fair share of resources and diminishes the quality of life not only for them but for us all. If we believe everybody in our American community counts, we simply must make sure everyone is counted.

That's an enormous undertaking. This year's Census represents the largest peacetime mobilization in American history, involving hundreds of thousands of local census takers and community volunteers. But the most important person in the process is you.

I want to thank the millions of Americans who have sent in their forms. But even today, about half still haven't been returned. We need the most accurate picture of America in the dawn of the 21st century.

So today I am issuing a proclamation declaring this Census Day and urging all Americans to take a little time this weekend to fill out and send in your form. I also have issued a memorandum to all federal employees urging them to do the same.

Having completed my own census form, I can tell you it only takes a few moments. You can also fill out your census form on-line, as the Vice President did just recently. The on-line form can be found at *www.2000.census.gov*.

It won't take long. The short form is the shortest since 1820. The long form is the shortest in history. And every question on both forms was reviewed and approved by Congress two years ago.

I know that Americans are concerned about their privacy, and that's why I also want to stress that the information you provide is strictly, **absolutely** confidential. Individual information will not be available to anyone outside the Census Bureau for any reason. **And the employees of the Census are subject to prison terms and stiff penalties if they violate that trust.**

Whether you have a long or a short form, fill it out completely and send it in promptly. America is counting on you. This is your future. Don't leave it blank. Thanks for listening.

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**PRESIDENT CLINTON COMMEMORATES CENSUS DAY,
URGES ALL AMERICANS TO COMPLETE THEIR CENSUS 2000 FORMS**

April 1, 2000

Today, in his weekly radio address, President Clinton will issue a proclamation commemorating April 1, 2000 as "Census Day" and will urge all Americans to complete and mail in their census forms. The Census is a vital statistical snapshot used to ensure fair representation in the Congress, to distribute billions in government funding, and to guide other important decisions that affect our everyday lives. The President today will release a new report from his Council of Economic Advisers that demonstrates the many vital uses of census data by businesses, community groups and others. He will also emphasize that completing the census form takes only a brief amount of time, and that every question both the long form and the short form has been reviewed and approved by Congress. Finally, he will reassure Americans concerned about their privacy that all individual information is absolutely confidential and cannot be used by anyone outside the Census Bureau for any reason.

MOBILIZING AMERICANS TO RESPOND TO THE CENSUS. As he issues a proclamation to commemorate April 1, 2000 as "Census Day," President Clinton today will call on all Americans to respond to the census. The U.S. Constitution requires the federal government to conduct a census every 10 years, and information from the census is vital to ensure fair representation in the Congress, to distribute billions in government funding, and to make other important decisions. Because the 1990 census missed 8.4 million people -- including many children, minorities, and low-income Americans -- the Census Bureau is engaged in a massive mobilization effort to count all Americans. As of March 29, however, only 46 percent of Americans had mailed in their census forms. Noting this, the President today will urge all Americans to complete and mail in their forms or respond to the census online (as Vice President Gore has done) by going to the Census web page, www.2000.census.gov. He will also call on federal employees and his Cabinet to lead this effort by their own example.

CENSUS INFORMATION AFFECTS VITAL DECISIONS ABOUT OUR EVERYDAY LIVES. Every question on the census form is approved by Congress and required by law. These questions help the government and communities determine where to build schools, child care facilities, Head Start centers, homes, hospitals, senior centers, job training programs, roads, and supermarkets. For instance, a question on the long form about the commuting time will help transportation planners design new roads and mass transit systems. Today the President will release a report from his Council of Economic Advisers that demonstrates how businesses, community organizations and academics use census data to make research, planning, hiring and other critical decisions. A low response rate would provide inaccurate information for these important decisions that impact our everyday lives.

REASSURING AMERICANS ABOUT THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF ALL CENSUS INFORMATION. The President will reassure the public today that all census information is absolutely confidential and, by law, cannot be shared with anyone outside the Census Bureau for any reason. He will add that Census Bureau employees are subject to stiff penalties if they violate that trust. The President today will also point out that completing the Census 2000 forms is not burdensome: the short form, which the vast majority of Americans receive, is the shortest it's been since 1820; the long form, which goes to only one in every six households, is the shortest in its history. Every question on both forms, the President will note, has been reviewed and approved by Congress.

Census – Long Form and College Students

Q&A

March 31, 2000

Long Form

Q: Recent news stories have raised questions about the legality and the “intrusiveness” of the census long form. Critics of the long form claim that the Constitution calls only for an “actual enumeration.”

A: Every subject on both the long and short form is mandated or required by law.

The Constitution (Article 1, Section 2, Clause 3) grants Congress the power to design the decennial census in such manner as it directs by law. Title 13 of the U.S. Code requires respondents to answer the census and requires the U.S. Census Bureau to maintain the strictest confidentiality of the data collected. Title 13 also requires the Department of Commerce to send the subjects and questions of the census questionnaires to Congress, which Commerce did. Congress reviewed the subjects for Census 2000 in 1997, and the actual questions and their order on the form in 1998.

At a time of increasing privacy concerns, it's understandable that people want to know why the data are needed and how the information will be protected. The law forbids Census from sharing responses with the IRS, FBI, INS, any other government agency or even the President. No one, except sworn Census Bureau employees, can see your questionnaire or link your name with your responses. Census workers are sworn to secrecy and if they give out any information, they face a \$5,000 fine and a five-year prison term. So we agree that privacy concerns are important, and that is why we have such safeguards in place. We also believe that it is important that all Americans are counted in this census.

Q: Why does the Census have so many questions?

A: The great majority of households will get a short form, which asks just seven content questions and, takes an average household fewer than 10 minutes to complete. The Census 2000 short form is the shortest since 1820 – or in 180 years. The long form, meanwhile, is the shortest in its history. Its 52 content questions are all required by law.

The only new question was on grandparents as caregivers, as required by the 1996 welfare reform law. And although important for programmatic needs, five subjects were dropped in 2000 because they were not explicitly mandated or required by law .

Each long form question provides valuable information for important public policy and business decisions. For example:

- The question on the number of telephones in the home will help plan local 911 emergency services and provide emergency and health-care services to homebound seniors without phone service.
- The question on commute-time to work helps transportation planners design new roads, bus routes, and mass transit systems and manage traffic congestion, as well as distribute federal transportation funds.
- The question on plumbing facilities helps local communities determine the quality of housing stock and identify areas eligible for public assistance and rehabilitation loans. The question on veterans status helps plan the location of veterans hospitals and to efficiently deliver veterans health-care and nursing services.

College Students

Q: Where are college students counted - at home or at school?

A: Students are counted where they attend school because that is where they live most of the time.

Q: How are students in dorms counted?

A: Students in dormitories are counted during Group Quarters Enumeration. Census takers, working with the college or university, will count students in their dormitories. The Census Bureau counts students living in on-campus housing between April 1st and May 6th.