



# Gov't offers new assurance Census info is private

Updated 3/7/2010 2:09 PM

WASHINGTON (AP) — With the 2010 population count looming, the government provided new assurances Thursday that information Americans fill out on their Census forms will be kept confidential and not be used for law enforcement.

In a legal opinion submitted to Congress, the Obama administration makes clear that Census data cannot be disclosed under the Patriot Act, the nation's main counterterrorism law. The government has previously given legal assurances the information will not be used for immigration enforcement.

"If Congress intended to override these protections it would say so clearly and explicitly," wrote Assistant Attorney General Ronald Weich.

**COMPLETE COVERAGE:** [Census 2010](#)

**PATRIOT ACT:** [Obama signs one-year extension](#)

**WORKERS:** [Census jobs unfilled in some places](#)

The legal assurance had been a sticking point for some minority groups, particularly South Asian and Muslim Americans, who argued that an ambiguity in federal laws could leave their Census data open for use in prosecutions involving national security. Some said they could not feel confident in filling out the forms based on solely the verbal promises of Commerce Secretary [Gary Locke](#) and other Census officials who said the data will not be shared with other federal agencies.

"All United States residents should be fully confident that the individual information they provide on Census forms is protected from disclosure by law," said Commerce spokesman Nick Kimball.

The Census Bureau this week began delivering letters to homes in rural areas and is mailing the

10-question forms to 120 million U.S. households on March 15. Officials have estimated the government survey will take just 10 minutes to complete, a change from previous censuses in which many people received a more detailed questionnaire.

**SCHEDULE:** [2010 Census key dates](#)

**Q&A:** [What you need to know about the Census](#)

**DEMOGRAPHICS:** [Multiracial no longer boxed in](#)

The population count, conducted every 10 years, is used to distribute House seats and more than \$400 billion in federal aid. The questions on the form ask about people's gender, race, family, housing, as well as their address and telephone number.

The government move comes as several black, Latino and Asian groups as well as some lawmakers have questioned whether the Census Bureau has been able to motivate hard-to-count groups, who are primarily minorities and the poor. One of the main obstacles to Census participation they cited has been a distrust of government, including concerns about whether their personal information may be misused.

The [Justice Department](#) is not aware of an instance where the Patriot Act has ever been used to obtain Census information. "The administration is confident that the Patriot Act still provides the tools and authorities we need to combat terrorism and protect the American people," said Justice

Advertisement

**hp** HIT PRINT AFFORDABLY

Have you HEARD THE BUZZ?

Save \$50 WHEN YOU TRADE IN YOUR OLD PRINTER.

OFFICEJET PRO DELIVERS 50% LESS COST-PER-PAGE THAN LASER.

LEARN MORE AT [HP.COM/OFFICEJETPRO](http://HP.COM/OFFICEJETPRO)

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™



spokesman Alejandro Miyar.

Copyright 2010 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Advertisement

**USA TODAY**  
**AutoPilot** 

The new travel app for iPhone® and iPod touch®

Presented by: 

**SEE HOW IT WORKS »**

The smartphone screen displays the following information:  
 - Signal: AT&T 3G, Time: 9:42 AM, Battery: 100%  
 - Location: 401  
 - App: USA TODAY  
 - Date: Sep 21, 2009  
 - Flight: A6 BNA to IAD Landed 09/21/2009 11:48 AM  
 - Weather: 73° Partly Cloudy  
 - Photo: View a Flickr gallery of Washington  
 - Article: Hotel Deals in Hilton Hotels picks

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™