

Official urges residents to fill out Census form



Dear residents of the city of South Lake Tahoe:

Some residents may be concerned about adverse immigration consequences resulting from their response to the 2010 Census. This letter confirms that there cannot be adverse immigration consequences because under the law, responses cannot be shared with immigration enforcement agencies. However, if residents do not respond there could be adverse financial consequences to the city in regards to federal funding. The city encourages all residents to return Census information.

South Lake Tahoe residents are now receiving their Census questionnaires in the mail or by hand delivery, marking the beginning of the Census 2010. The questionnaire asks 10, quick questions, including the name and age of the residents at each South Lake Tahoe residence. Completing the questionnaire should take less than ten minutes. The Census does not include any questions about immigration status. Disclosing personal information like names and addresses to the Census Bureau has triggered fear among some citizens that such disclosure could lead to negative immigration consequences, including harassment, incarceration or even deportation.

However, please be advised that Federal law provides otherwise. By law, the Census Bureau cannot share any person's questionnaire responses with anyone, including with law enforcement agencies and Customs and Border Patrol. Disclosure of confidential Census information is a federal

crime that carries penalties including possible imprisonment. Each resident of South Lake Tahoe who responds to the Census may rest assured that their answers cannot be used for immigration purposes.

I encourage every resident of South Lake Tahoe to respond and return the Census questionnaire as soon as possible. The consequences of declining to respond could be devastating to the already financially strapped city. Federal and state agencies use Census data in deciding how to allocate funds for government programs. In addition, the Census is used to draw federal, state and local electoral districts. Failure of residents to respond results in an "under-count." Consequences of an under-count can cost the city tens of millions of dollars, and make it more difficult to provide vital services like health care, housing and public safety. If all residents are not fully counted by the Census, the city will receive less than our share of public services and could wield less than our proportionate share of electoral power. These costs are too serious to ignore. The City implores each and every resident to respond and return 2010 Census questionnaire.

Very truly yours,

Patrick Enright, city attorney city of South Lake Tahoe