

Census 2010
Superintendent Jesus M. Gandara

Think back to the arrival of the year 2000. Fears of a Y2K computer meltdown had just faded, Bill Clinton was turning over the White House to George W. Bush and the twin towers still stood on the New York City skyline.

Locally, the economy was expanding, fueled by what looked like an unstoppable housing boom. With scores of new residents, school enrollment was soaring and property taxes were plentiful to meet the growing needs. How times have changed.

In just 10 years everything is different from the size of government budgets to the cost of gas. The demographics of South Bay have changed too. Who lives here, what businesses are open and the kinds of jobs available are all different. Along with these changes, the needs of our community have also shifted.

That's why it's time to stop and be counted.

At the start of each new decade, our nation takes a census to get as clear a picture as possible of how many people are living in the United States. This becomes the nation's official population count. Census data is used to direct funds for public services and resources.

Lawmakers decide where to build new schools, libraries and hospitals and roads based on the census. How much federal money is awarded to our cities depends on the census. Each year, the federal government distributes more than \$300 billion in federal funds to cities and states, according to the census.

The census is also used to reapportion seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and redistricting of seats in state and local government. Being counted makes a difference in how your interests are represented.

Because the public resources to meet the needs of you and your family depend on an accurate census, it's extremely important that every single person living in our community is counted.

Leaving some people out of the census means a potential loss of dollars for our schools and community.

In recent years, the Sweetwater District didn't qualify to apply for several federal grants because existing census data does not accurately reflect the needs of the population we serve. Faulty census data has denied the district the chance to receive tens of thousands of dollars in grant funding for school libraries, teaching training and student counseling services, to name just a few missed opportunities.

We need everyone to be counted in the 2010 census so that our children receive every opportunity for funding that is available.

In March, all households will receive questionnaires. It should take about 10 minutes to mark your answers to 10 simple questions about the people living at your address.

Be sure to count all members of your household—both citizens and non-citizens as well as relatives and non-relatives living at the same address.

It's natural to worry about protecting your personal information. But, by law, the Census Bureau must keep your answers confidential and cannot share your information with other government agencies. The data is collected only to produce statistics. Your answers cannot be used against you in court or by law enforcement.

As individuals, it can be hard to make a difference. The census provides a great opportunity for each of us to influence decisions made at every level of government. I urge you to be counted in 2010 and help ensure that our schools and community get their fair share.