



Written by [Becky Akers](#) on March 24, 2010

Sins of the Census

A rebellion's brewing out there over the US census, and rightfully so. You don't need to be a Tea Partier to object to the intrusive questionnaire — even if the form this year is “One of the shortest...in history — 10 Questions in 10 Minutes.”

Or so the Census Bureau alleges. Leave it to the Feds to get mighty personal in those ten minutes — and by Question 3, no less: do you own or rent your home? Anyone living there with you? List them by name, please, as well as your own race, sex, and date of birth (not just the year, but month and day, too. Perhaps Uncle Sam wants to send birthday cards — or bureaucrats to counsel households whose elderly inhabitants are costing Obamacare too much).

What does any of this have to do with apportionment of direct taxes and representation of your state in Congress, the sole reasons the Constitution lists for “Enumerating” us? Only fools rat themselves out to a government rapidly approaching omnipotence, one that tortures, [imprisons more people per capita](#) than any other on earth, and this week arrogated to itself control over its subjects' health — indeed, that now holds the power of life and death over us. Should its poltroons next decide to go door-to-door and forcibly vaccinate us or our children against the contagion-du-jour, we will rue having disclosed who resides where.

But the census' ten questions are mild compared to the interrogation recipients of the dreaded “American Community Survey” suffer. The Bureau bills the ACS as “a critical element in the Census Bureau's reengineered decennial census program.” It “is an ongoing survey that collects detailed population and housing information from a sample of U. S. households and group quarters (GQ) facilities each month” — and they do mean detailed. Should you be the “one out of 480 households to receive the ACS” within the next four weeks (every “individual address” is at risk of being “selected once in a 5-year period”), prepare yourself: your spouse didn't ask this many questions, let alone such meddlesome ones, before tying the knot. Exactly what kind of home do you inhabit? On how many acres





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does it sit? Are you the proud owner of a flush toilet? A refrigerator and stove? How do you heat the place? How many vehicles clutter your garage? How much do you pay for electricity, water, sewers, and insurance each month?

All this, and we haven't even left the "Housing" section. Wait until we get to "Person 1" and the government's insatiable curiosity about his education, immigration and marital status, children, grandchildren, and, of course, health ("Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, does this person have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?" Does he "have difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping?"). "Persons 2, 3, 4, and 5" get off no easier.

The Bureau's reason for snooping is as offensive as the prying itself. Our replies "[\[help\] to determine](#) how more than \$400 billion will be allocated to communities across the country." Recall where that \$400 billion originated. Yep: in your pocket and mine. Wouldn't it be easier, cheaper, more efficient, moral and far less infuriating if the government simply kept its hands off our wallets rather than grilling us about how to spend the loot?

Then there's the dirty little secret the Bureau hopes its victims don't discover: one of the Constitution's two excuses for the Census disappeared a century ago. [Public Law 62-5 capped the number of Congressional seats](#) at 435 in 1913. Ever since, counting us has been nothing but an excuse for the Feds to worm their way ever more deeply into our affairs. Shifts in population from district to district must still be tabulated, true: perhaps [Ohio will lose a representative in the House while Texas gains three](#). But that hardly justifies either the nosiness or expense of the census any more than it does the existence of an entire and very extravagant bureau.

We received an example of that extravagance, [which the Bureau defensively excuses](#), in its "advance letter." That and a "reminder postcard" cost taxpayers [\\$85 million](#). The [Census Bureau's budget](#) for 2009 amounted to something like \$238,740,000 — but that seems to do little more than turn on the lights at headquarters. Any further actions the bureaucrats take require "appropriations." The "Periodic Censuses and Programs" consumed another \$2,365,882,000. A few additional expenses brought the total for 2009 to a staggering \$2,634,622,000 — and that wasn't the decennial. Imagine how much of our money the wastrels will squander this year.

And for what? Why are we paying the Feds to pester us until we confess whether we have indoor plumbing and how much money we earn? Doesn't the IRS already ferret out the latter? Meanwhile, America's \$10-billion-per-year, private market-research industry can find out anything worth knowing, and what it can't discover isn't anyone's business anyway. Nor does it threaten us with draconian fines of \$100 per unanswered question and \$500 for erroneously answered ones.

The Census Bureau is redundant, expensive, and annoying. It cruelly bullies Americans into divulging what they'd rather not. Worse, all this trauma is completely unnecessary and has been for 97 years.

It's time we count out the Census Bureau.

Becky Akers, an expert on the American Revolution, writes frequently about issues related to security and privacy. Her articles and columns have been published by *Lewrockwell.com*, *The Freeman*, *Military History Magazine*, *American History Magazine*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *New York Post*, and other publications.



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