



Written by [Bruce Walker](#) on March 18, 2010

Latino Clerics Urge Non-Compliance With Census

The National Coalition of Latino Clergy and Christian Leaders has taken the position that illegal immigrants (who are overwhelmingly Hispanic) should not fill out the census forms arriving in the mail. The rationale for this position, said Reverend Miguel Rivera, the chairman of the coalition, is to create pressure for a process which would allow illegal immigrants to become citizens.



Article I, Section 2 of the Constitution requires an actual counting of persons — the decennial census — and what this Latino coalition is advocating is an organized violation of the law. There are legitimate questions about how to count illegal immigrants in the census. Although all people are to be counted, Native Americans not taxed are excluded in the census; all free people are counted as a whole person; and “all other persons” are counted as three-fifths of a person. Historically that meant slaves, but the constitutional language does not say “slaves.” Does the Constitution require that illegal immigrants be included in that category of “all other persons”? If so, then only three-fifths of an illegal immigrant should be included in the census.

Rivera estimates that there are three million members of churches in his coalition of 20,000 churches. Out of these three million, Reverend Rivera estimates 38 percent of the congregants in these churches, including one-sixth of the clergy, are illegal immigrants. That translates into about 800,000 illegal immigrants who attend services at these churches and who Reverend Rivera and the coalition wish to have a path to citizenship. If the three-fifths provision applies to illegal immigrants, these 800,000 should be counted as 480,000.

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The impact of such a boycott would not only affect illegal immigrants but also Hispanics belonging to the coalition who were either legal immigrants or citizens. Thwarting the census process would reduce the amount of federal programmatic funding for those areas in which Hispanics lived as well as reducing the numbers of persons counting for purposes of reapportionment and redistricting or congressional, state legislative, and municipal council districts.

Christian clergy have, from time to time in American history, urged parishioners to disobey unjust laws. The National Coalition of Latino Clergy and Christian Leaders, however, is not contending that the



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census laws are unjust or that the underlying constitutional provision requiring a census is immoral, but rather that legislation that the coalition wants has not yet been passed. The threat is, in effect, a form of political blackmail against those politicians who rely upon support from illegal immigrants and their friends.

The impact of consciously misreporting the census data has other consequences as well. The data is collected by the Department of Commerce, and it is used by businesses to make economic decisions; poor data means poor business decisions. State and local governments also use census data for a variety of decisions and policies; these decisions and policies, also, are compromised by corrupted data. And, of course, the boycott would hurt the very people that the National Coalition of Latino Clergy and Christian Leaders are trying to help.

The Census Bureau is already suspected by many Americans of trying to politicize the census, which is a key reason Republican Senator Gregg declined the office of Secretary of Commerce in the Obama administration — the Census Bureau was going to be directed by the White House and not the Cabinet Secretary. Pressure like that which the National Coalition of Latino Clergy and Christian Leaders is trying to impose upon the federal government will doubtless increase the perception that the census is becoming another political football.

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