

**NATIONAL
STATE DATA CENTER
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We Bring Value-Added Census Data and Education to the User

December 7, 2009

Dr. Robert Groves, Director
U.S. Bureau of the Census
Washington, DC 20233

Dear Dr. Groves,

The Steering Committee of the State Data Center (SDC) Network would like to thank the Bureau for Eric Newburger's presentation on the Census Bureau's 2010 Rapid Response Reporting System at the 2009 SDC Annual Training Conference in mid-October 2009. The overall reaction from the group was tremendously favorable as this tool will be extremely useful in providing local officials with critical and timely information about the progress of 2010 Census data collection in their community. The presentation, however, identified an area where the system's usefulness may be jeopardized, and we would like to suggest some possible solutions to rectify this issue.

The system uses the 2010 Census collection tracts for reporting and presenting the response rate data. These collection tracts are not consistent with other geographically delineated areas that local officials and other analysts will be considering when identifying concentrations of hard-to-enumerate populations. The reporting system's ability to visualize the information on a map is an extremely effective way to show relative response rates, but unfortunately is limited in use due to the system's current geographic display.

The steering committee would like to recommend three possible solutions to this problem.

- **Report the response rates by Census 2000 tabulation tracts.** This would allow local officials to easily tie the 2010 response rates to Census 2000 data, including the hard-to-count scores, and allow them to gain valuable insight and implement reaction strategies.
- **Provide a crosswalk between the 2010 Census collection tracts and the Census 2000 tabulation tracts.** Assuming that the 2010 Census collection tracts are the same geographic areas as the 2000 Census tabulation tracts, but with different numbers, this is a reasonable solution for local officials. We recognize that there will not be an exact match between the 2010 Census collection tracts and the Census 2000 tabulation tracts. Generally, however, the boundaries of these two sets of census tracts should be fairly close to each other. For the purposes of this program, knowing that a given 2010 collection tract is roughly the same as a particular 2000 tabulation tracts will greatly enhance our ability to look at the characteristics of areas with lower response rates and react accordingly.
- **Provide a shapefile with the 2010 Census collection tracts.** If many of the local governments that will be interested in the tract level response rates have sophisticated GIS operations, then they will be able to overlay the 2010 Census response rates over the Census 2000 census tract data for analysis and insight.

We ask that you implement one or more of our suggestions for improving the 2010 Census Rapid Response Reporting System. Our belief is that ultimately there is a need to look at the 2010 Census response rates in conjunction with the characteristics of the weakly responding areas. The 2010 Census

collection census tracts are the only geographic areas that are not comparable to Census 2000 geographic areas.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. If you or your staff have any questions regarding our suggestions, please relay these concerns to us through Franklin J. Ambrose, Chief, State and Governmental Programs, Customer Liaison and Marketing Services Office.

Sincerely,
State Data Center Steering Committee

cc: Arnold Jackson, Associate Director for Decennial Census
Barbara Harris, Chief, Customer Liaison and Marketing Services Office
Frank Ambrose, Chief, State and Governmental Programs, CLMSO
Eric Newburger, Census 2010 Publicity Office