

None Of Your Business!

By Rep Ron Paul

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You may not have heard of the American Community Survey, but you will. The national census, which historically is taken every ten years, has expanded to quench the federal bureaucracy's ever-growing thirst to govern every aspect of American life. The new survey, unlike the traditional census, is taken each and every year at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars. And it's not brief. It contains 24 pages of intrusive questions concerning matters that simply are none of the government's business, including your job, your income, your physical and emotional health, your family status, your dwelling, and your intimate personal habits.

The questions are both ludicrous and insulting. The survey asks, for instance, how many bathrooms you have in your house, how many miles you drive to work, how many days you were sick last year, and whether you have trouble getting up stairs. It goes on and on, mixing inane questions with highly detailed inquiries about your financial affairs. One can only imagine the countless malevolent ways our federal bureaucrats could use this information. At the very least the survey will be used to dole out pork, which is reason enough to oppose it.

Keep in mind the survey is not voluntary, nor is the Census Bureau asking politely. Americans are legally obligated to answer, and can be fined up to \$1,000 per question if they refuse!

I introduced an amendment last week that would have eliminated funds for this intrusive survey in a spending bill, explaining on the House floor that perhaps the American people don't appreciate being threatened by Big Brother. The amendment was met by either indifference or hostility, as most members of Congress either don't care about or actively support government snooping into the private affairs of citizens.

One of the worst aspects of the census is its focus on classifying people by race. When government tells us it wants information to "help" any given group, it assumes every individual who shares certain physical characteristics has the same interests, or wants the same things from government. This is an inherently racist and offensive assumption. The

census, like so many federal policies and programs, inflames racism by encouraging Americans to see themselves as members of racial groups fighting each other for a share of the federal pie.

The census also represents a form of corporate welfare, since the personal data collected on hundred of millions of Americans can be sold to private businesses. Surely business enjoys having such extensive information available from one source, but it's hardly the duty of taxpayers to subsidize the cost of market research.

At least the national census has its origins in the Constitution, which is more than one can say about the vast majority of programs funded by Congress. Still, Article I makes it clear that the census should be taken every ten years for the sole purpose of congressional redistricting (and apportionment of taxes, prior to the disastrous 16th amendment). This means a simple count of the number of people living in a given area, so that numerically equal congressional districts can be maintained. The founders never authorized the federal government to continuously survey the American people.

More importantly, they never envisioned a nation where the people would roll over and submit to every government demand. The American Community Survey is patently offensive to all Americans who still embody that fundamental American virtue, namely a healthy mistrust of government. The information demanded in the new survey is none of the government's business, and the American people should insist that Congress reject it now before it becomes entrenched.

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