

Ohio and New York have the largest rural populations, with Michigan, Georgia, California, Indiana and Florida close behind.

Now, why is the census important to rural America?

First, the Constitution requires the federal government to conduct a census every ten years to help apportion the 435 seats of the House of Representatives among the states. So, states that have a large undercount are at risk of losing political representation in Congress.

Second, billions of dollars in federal aid to states and local governments are allocated using census data. In 2000, almost \$200 billion in federal aid will be distributed through 20 federal programs that range from agriculture to community development to education to health.

According to the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO), rural communities are at risk of losing \$2,500 each year in federal and state aid for each person that is undercounted. That adds up to a significant amount of lost revenue for rural communities over a ten year period, especially when you consider the numbers.

In 1990, the census missed 5.9 percent of rural renters, compared with 4.2 percent of urban renters. The Census Bureau also estimates it missed about 1.2 percent of all rural residents, which is about three-quarters of a million people.

Let me put this into perspective. There are six states, plus the District of Columbia, that have populations below 750,000. So, the rural undercount is equivalent to misplacing Alaska, Delaware, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, or Wyoming.

Third, accurate census data is essential for local decision makers, whether economic development planners, school board members or business leaders. The more data rural communities have at their disposal, the better prepared they will be to serve their citizens in terms of municipal services and programs. It is also an essential ingredient in developing strategic plans aimed at attracting new businesses and industries.

With so much at risk, it is vital that we all work together to ensure that rural Americans are counted. This is not a partisan issue, but a rural issue. Stand up and be counted Rural America!

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. CHARLES A. GONZALEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 15, 2000

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall Nos. 46 and 47, I was away on official business. Had I been present, I would have voted "aye" on each.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ADAM SMITH

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 15, 2000

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, March 9, I had to fly home for my wife's ultrasound and missed several votes.

On House vote 42 on H.R. 3846 (Minimum Wage/Question of Continued Consideration) I would have voted "yes."

On House vote 43 on H.R. 3846 (Minimum Wage/Two-Year Increase) I would have voted "yes."

On House vote 44 on H.R. 3846 (Minimum Wage/Recommit) I would have voted "yes."

On House vote 45 (Minimum Wage/Passage) I would have voted "yes."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LYNN N. RIVERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 15, 2000

Ms. RIVERS. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall vote 41—H.R. 3081, I inadvertently voted "yes." It was my intention to vote "no" on rollcall vote 41—H.R. 3081.

HOPE FOR SYRIA

HON. BILL MCCOLLUM

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 15, 2000

Mr. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, since its establishment, Israel has been fighting and striving for genuine and lasting peace with its neighbors so that it can concentrate on making the desert bloom, and, more recently, on developing one of the world's leading centers of high-tech industries. Israel is the United States' closest ally in the region, and the bulwark of furthering U.S. interests in the region. Little wonder that virtually the entire political spectrum in Washington is committed to supporting Israel's quest for peace and security.

However, despite this American commitment, the Middle East is in the midst of a crisis emanating from the latest developments in the Peace Process advocated by the Clinton Administration. The flagrant absurdity of this latest turn of events is an accurate manifestation of the Administration's overall policy. For nearly twenty years, the Syrian-dominated Lebanese Government has been demanding an Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon. Now, when the Israeli Government committed to just such a unilateral withdrawal by next July, Beirut and Damascus threaten war. "An Israeli unilateral withdrawal [from south Lebanon] will not work. It will lead to another war," President Emile Lahoud warned, echoing Hafiz al-Assad's position. Why? The Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon will remove the primary Syrian point of pressure on Israel to accept the extremely disadvantageous "package deal" advocated by the Clinton Administration.

The Clinton Administration is pushing Israel and Syria to reach a peace agreement by next May. Both countries are under tremendous pressure to sign before the U.S. elections. The principles of the Israeli-Syrian agreement the Administration is pushing are: (1) a complete Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights and south Lebanon; (2) enduring and now legitimized Syrian occupation of Lebanon; (3) a U.S.-dominated international force in south Lebanon and the Golan Heights; and (4) a financial inducement package to both Israel and Syria that, by conservative estimates, will ex-

ceed \$100 billion to be dispensed over a few years.

In its zeal to bring about this package deal, the Clinton Administration seems unperturbed by the widespread opposition in Israel to any withdrawal from the strategically crucial Golan Heights—particularly the kind of a total and speedy withdrawal the U.S. is trying to bring about. Moreover, the Administration ignores recent polls indicating that about two-thirds of the American public are against U.S. support for Syria and any form of deployment of troops in the Golan or Lebanon. Nor does the Clinton Administration take into consideration the significance of the pre-conditions introduced by Syria—a demand for an advance Israeli commitment to a full withdrawal with U.S. guarantees. This demand is intentionally phrased so as to bring about stalling of the peace process because, as Damascus knows well, Jerusalem cannot comply with the letter of the demand (even if Jerusalem is ready to commit to such a withdrawal) because Israeli law requires a referendum for any withdrawal from the Golan.

Most puzzling, however, is the White House's haste. The question it raises has nothing to do with the essence of the Israeli-Syrian "package deal". The Administration's sense of urgency does not make sense in the context of the internal dynamics in Syria.

Syria is in a major crisis. Hafiz al-Assad's health is in a bad shape. He is desperate to ensure that his son Bashar succeeds him and for the U.S. to provide for both averting the collapse of the Syrian economy and the pay-offs to the Syrian elite Bashar must make in order not to be toppled. The U.S. is also expected to replace the virtually free oil Syria now gets from Iran. By careful analysis, these financial requirements amount to \$35–50 billion a year. Hafiz al-Assad is willing to "make peace" in order to ensure this U.S. financial support. He also expects the U.S. to legitimize the Syrian occupation of Lebanon which will also clear the Syrian drug and counterfeit trade as well as the income they provide for the Syrian ruling elite.

However, the Syrian ruling establishment, which is predominantly Allawite (a Shiite people that is a minority in predominantly Sunni Syria), is afraid of Bashar. He is young, inexperienced and weak. The Syrian elite knows that once Hafiz al-Assad dies, the Syrian Islamists and Iran may well rise up, overthrow and slaughter the Allawite elite, and establish a Sunni Islamist government in Damascus. If so, Iran and an Islamist Syria will then export Islamist subversion and instability to all other Arab countries, including such U.S. allies as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan. Islamist terrorism by such organizations as the HizbAllah, HAMAS and Islamic Jihad, all of whom are already sponsored by Syria and Iran, would also escalate. The only way to prevent the rise of an Iran-dominated Islamist regime in Damascus is by securing a strong Allawite-dominated regime—something that Bashar is incapable of achieving despite all of his father's desperate grooming. The ongoing purges in Syria and Lebanon, as well as the sudden change of the Syrian Government, only highlighted Bashar's weakness and insecurity, as well as his father's trepidations.

The Syrian elite is fully aware of the Islamist threat. Indeed, there is a major segment within the Syrian Allawite elite led by Dr. Rifat al-Assad (Hafiz al-Assad's estranged brother) that is very pragmatic in addressing the forthcoming crisis. They believe that the only

chance for the Allawite to remain in power (and thus survive slaughter by the Islamists) is by reversing the virtual collapse of the Syrian economy. Only an economic upsurge can avert the radicalization of the Sunni majority. And only improved relations with the U.S.-led West can save the Syrian economy from an impending collapse. Furthermore, Dr. Rifat al-Assad believes that a strong alliance between the peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean—the Allawites of Syria, the Christian Maronites of Lebanon, the Jews of Israel, and the Druze dwelling in all three countries—will transform the region into an economic power house as the bridge between East and West, as well as the bastion of regional stability as the source of prosperity and employment for all. Therefore, the Syrian elite led by Dr. Rifat al-Assad appears willing to reach agreement with the U.S. and Israel on all major issues in return for removing the sanctions and normalization of relations. Significantly, the Syrian Allawite elite believes that the alternative to such a deal is their slaughter—for them it is literally a life-saving deal.

Therefore, the U.S. should assist Dr. Rifat al-Assad and the responsible and pragmatic segments of the Syrian elite to come to power in a post-Hafiz al-Assad Damascus and begin the process of recovering and restoring the economy. Given Syria's crucial geo-strategic posture, it is imperative for the entire U.S.-led West to ensure that a pro-Western, Democratically oriented government—the kind of government Dr. Rifat al-Assad is striving for—is established in Damascus. Meanwhile, the U.S. and Israel should wait until the government of Dr. Rifat al-Assad redirects Syria's national policies and priorities, proves its commitment to policies of moderation and compromises, as well as economic reforms. Once stable, this Syrian government will be capable of making long-term commitments. Only then it would be possible for both Israel and Syria to reach enduring and genuine peace for the sake of peace. This kind of peace the U.S. should, and will, support.

TRIBUTE TO CHIEF JUSTICE
ERNEST A. FINNEY, JR.

HON. JAMES E. CLYBURN

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 15, 2000

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Ernest A. Finney, Jr., who will retire on March 23, 2000, as Chief Justice of the South Carolina Supreme Court.

Ernest Finney moved to Orangeburg, SC, from Virginia as a teenager when his father became the Dean of Claflin College in Orangeburg. He received his undergraduate degree from Claflin, and later his law degree from South Carolina State College.

Although an attorney, Mr. Finney began his career as a teacher in Conway, SC, where he supplemented his teaching salary by waiting tables. He attended his first meeting of the South Carolina Bar as a waiter, because blacks were not allowed membership in the state bar association.

After practicing civil rights law in my hometown Sumter, of South Carolina for a number of years, Mr. Finney began his distinguished public service career in 1973 when he was

elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives, where he served until his election as Judge of the Third Judicial Circuit in 1976. On April 3, 1985, Mr. Finney was elected Associate Justice of the South Carolina Supreme Court, becoming the first African American to hold that office since Reconstruction. On May 11, 1994, Justice Finney was elected Chief Justice of the South Carolina Supreme Court.

In addition to his duties on the court, Chief Justice Finney is devoted to his family and community. He is married to the former Frances Davenport and is the father of three fine children—Lynn C., a college professor, Ernest A. III, and Jerry Leo, both attorneys. He is the grandfather of two—Amanda and Felicia. Chief Justice Finney is a dedicated alumnus of Claflin College, where he serves on the Board of Trustees, and is a long time member of Emmanuel United Methodist Church. He has been a role model and mentor for legions of young attorneys.

Mr. Speaker, Chief Justice Ernest A. Finney, Jr. guided the Supreme Court of South Carolina and the state judiciary with a steady, balanced hand. I ask that you and my colleagues join me in saluting him on the occasion of his retirement for a job well done.

IN RECOGNITION OF VIVIANA
RISCA

HON. GARY L. ACKERMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 15, 2000

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Viviana Risca in honor of her reception of the first-place prize in this year's prestigious Intel Science Talent Search, America's oldest and most highly regarded pre-college science contest.

Viviana is first in her senior class of 292 students at Paul D. Schreiber High School, in Port Washington, NY. Her award-winning computer science project was chosen from over 1,500 submitted entries, reviewed by a board of ten distinguished scientists who judged the entries for their research ability, scientific originality and creative thinking.

Using DNA as the medium, Viviana studied steganography, a data encryption technique that embeds secret computer messages within large amounts of seemingly innocent information. For her molecular computing project, Viviana encrypted the secret message "JUNE 6__INVASION: NORMANDY," and then inserted it in the gene sequence of a DNA strand.

Over the years, more than 115,000 students from American high schools in all 50 states and overseas have completed independent research projects and submitted entries. More than 100 of the world's most coveted science and math honors have been won by alumni of this program. Five finalists of this contest have gone on to win the Nobel Prize, and thirty have been elected to the National Academy of Sciences.

I had the pleasure of meeting Viviana while she was in Washington, D.C. for the final phase of this year's competition. Viviana is a talented young woman and she is a fine example of the amazing potential of our nation's youth.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues in the House of Representatives to join me today in congratulating Viviana Risca upon receiving the first place-prize for her outstanding scientific capabilities and tremendous innovation.

TRIBUTE TO ROLLIE ROTH

HON. ELTON GALLEGLY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 15, 2000

Mr. GALLEGLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in tribute to Rollie Roth, who will be honored this week by the Simi Valley Education Foundation at the Lew Roth Awards Dinner, to be held at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in my district.

Rollie Roth has been an active member of the Simi Valley, CA, community for about 35 years. She served for eight years as a commissioner on the city's Public Safety Committee, assisted the community's Incorporation Study Committee on research projects and volunteered for the March of Dimes and American Cancer Society.

But it is in the area of education that Rollie Roth has truly made her mark.

She served on the PTA of every school that her three children—Paul, Miriam and Barry—attended. At Vista Fundamental School, she was responsible for the newsletter for two years. She also served two years as PTA President at Sycamore School.

With Rollie's full support, her husband, the late Lew Roth, served for 25 years on the Simi Valley Unified School District Board of Education. It was his vision that led to the founding of the Simi Valley Education Foundation.

In 1993, Rollie was appointed to the Foundation board. An energetic board member, she has served as Board Secretary and provides leadership in staging the benefit dinner that bears her husband's name.

Mr. Speaker, Rollie Roth has been a stabilizing influence for both the community and her family. She cared enough about her community, and of teaching her children the importance of community, to remain active after Lew's death while raising her children. Rollie Roth's dedication and determination has also influenced many others to become involved.

Mr. Speaker, I know my colleagues will join the Simi Valley Education Foundation and me in paying special tribute to Rollie Roth's years of dedication to our community and its children.

HONORING KRISTINE THALMAN
FROM ANAHEIM, CA

HON. CHRISTOPHER COX

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 15, 2000

Mr. COX. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Kristine Thalman, a loyal staff member at the city of Anaheim, CA. Kris will be retiring from the city after a long and distinguished career.

In her career, especially for the last 13 years, Kris has served as the Governmental Relations Director for the city. She has ensured very smooth relations between the city