



Southern Coalition for Social Justice

Census 2010: Reducing the Undercount, Building Grassroots Power

IMPORTANT DATES

April 1, 2010
Census Day

December 2010
The Census Bureau delivers populations count to the President for apportionment.

March 2011
The Census Bureau delivers redistricting data to states.

FURTHER READING


www.southerncoalition.org/census

REGIONAL PARTNERS

- Southern Echo
- SE Regional Economic Justice Network
- Democracy NC
- Blueprint NC
- Student Action with Farmworkers
- Voice of Vietnamese Americans

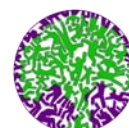
Conducting outreach around the census can be a fantastic opportunity for grassroots community and labor organizations to build their base, strengthen their capacity, and cultivate relationships with other progressive and grassroots organizations

Organizations are using census outreach to:

- Deepen involvement and outreach skill levels of members and staff.
 - Create a more politicized and engaged membership base that is ready to fight for social and economic justice.
 - Build a contact list of supporters, potential members, and volunteers (or for particular electoral focused voter engagement campaigns, defending a contract, support for a new organizing drive)
 - Build relationships with community, cultivate for campaigns.
 - Gain positive media exposure.
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- Survey the social and economic priorities in hard to count communities
 - Identify workers for potential new organizing drives.
 - Build and strengthen volunteer capacity and infrastructure (phone trees, block captains, texting networks, email lists).
 - Connect with other social justice organizations and strengthen coalitions.
 - Build coalitions and alliances across traditional boundaries (neighborhoods, workplaces, municipal boundaries).

Example:

A coalition of worker and grassroots community organizations in Florida is targeting their census outreach in four key areas of the state to broaden their base for future struggles. They are creating a paid canvass that will identify members and supporters who can be the base for key redistricting and electoral struggles in the years to come.



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Census 2010 and Beyond: The Southern Echo Model

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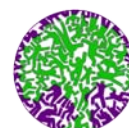
FURTHER READING

www.southerncoalition.org/census
www.southernecho.org

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- 1. Census:** Work to create a full and accurate census count is only one step in building the capacity to impact the formation and implementation of public policy. It is an important foundation in the policy process because the census is the gold standard for developing data that is used in every aspect of policy formation at the city, county, state and federal levels. It is also the primary data used to re-draw political districts every year to re-distribute power and the primary information on which the allocation of billions of dollars in federal funds are allocated to cities, counties, and states. The organization-building work around the census is an opportunity to create the infrastructure needed to impact comprehensive planning, zoning, and redistricting.
- 2. Redistricting:** The re-drawing of political districts is not objective and abstract. The results always reflect which communities had the greatest impact on the districts drawn and, therefore, which communities have the best opportunities to elect public officials who are accountable and responsive to the needs and interests of these communities. Redistricting will be done whether or not our communities are organized sufficiently to have a major impact on how districts are drawn. If our communities are not involved they will have the least likelihood that their interests will be considered. The organization-building around the redistricting work is an opportunity to build the infrastructure to increase voter education, voter registration, and voter turnout to elect accountable public officials.
- 3. Elections:** The election process where the community gets to help decide who are the officials that will adopt and implement public policies that affect our communities. This includes but is not limited to such policies as the location of low-income suitable affordable housing or mixed-income housing, non-profit hospitals, public schools, and public parks and other recreational facilities, and the allocation of public funds for all kinds of public services. This process also includes where not to located such enterprises such as factories, industry and other businesses that produce pollution and toxins because they degrade and endanger residential communities, and so on. The organizational base and consciousness-raising developed during the census and redistricting phases, can have a major impact on the turnout on election days of an electorate knowledgeable about the issues and who may best represent their interests.
- 4. Post-Election Accountability:** It is not enough to elect people, even good people. The pressures on elected officials is very great to turn away from their constituencies to play ball with powerful interests that do not share community interests. Therefore, it is essential that communities use the organizational base built during the census, redistricting and election work -- *after* the elections -- to hold elected representatives accountable and responsive to the needs and interests of our low-wealth communities of color.



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