

**By Russ Pankonin**

**The Imperial Republican**

In the 2000 census, Nebraska finished second only to Iowa for the highest percentage of state response to the census survey.

Just like in college football, Nebraska wants to be #1 in the 2010 census results.

Vic Gentry, manager of the census office in North Platte, said Nebraska wants to eclipse Iowa's 2000 mark to become the best counted state in 2010.

To make that happen, Gentry said the U.S. Census Bureau is still looking for workers in this region to help complete the 2010 count.

He said 5,000 people will be hired by the Census in Nebraska to help insure an accurate count across the state. About 1,000 people will be hired through Gentry's North Platte office.

People interested in assisting with the census process can contact Gentry's office directly at 308-221-3040.

He said they already have some workers for Chase, Perkins and Dundy Counties, but are still looking for more.

An applicant can apply to assist the process and, if selected, will undergo training to prepare for the work.

Gentry's goal is to complete hiring by the end of 2009 so they can be ready for the collection process which will peak in March and April, 2010.

He explained completing census forms remains vital for out-state Nebraskans when it comes to its representative government.

As dictated by the U.S. Constitution, a national census is held every 10 years to count population for determining the number of seats each state gets in the U.S. House of Representatives.

This census data is also used to apportion state senators in the Nebraska Legislature.

People in Nebraska's 3rd Congressional District should make sure they're counted to avoid the possible elimination of the seat in Congress.

Another factor in a complete count of both citizens and non-citizens in the state comes in the form of federal aid to states.

Based on census counts, the federal government returns aid funds to each state annually at a rate of \$1,114 per person.

Gentry said Nebraska misses out on these dollars when not all residents are counted.

Census questionnaires will be mailed or delivered to households in March 2010.

Upon receipt, households should complete the 10-question form and mail it back right away.

The Census will track receipt of the forms and those households that do not respond will receive a replacement questionnaire in early April.

If the form is still not returned, census workers will visit households to take a count in person.

Gentry said when workers are dispatched to complete the count, it proves costly for the Census Bureau.

For every one percent of the national population that must be counted by census takers, it costs \$90 million. In 2010, 35 percent of the population had to be counted by workers.

In the 2000 census, Chase County matched the state response rate at 75 percent.

Perkins County hit 76 percent response compared to 72 percent in Hayes County, 67 percent in Dundy County and 65 percent in Hitchcock County.

