

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Show us the money

While there's more to the census than just parceling out federal funds willy-nilly, the decennial headcount of Americans should definitely be looked as a race to the bank. The data is also critical for the reapportionment of congressional seats. In general, the more people a city or town has, the more money it gets.

Nevada forfeited \$200 million throughout the 1990s because of an inaccurate count in the 1990. The low return rate of census forms stymied state efforts to corral millions in needed funds to direct toward crucial social services. Left without the bounty, the state was forced to enact bond after bond to fund projects. Floated through the last decade were multimillion-dollar tax bonds to build new schools, additional assessments on homes worth a certain value to finance infrastructure, impact fees on developers and other money-wringing efforts.

Census officials estimate 1.6 percent of the population, mostly minorities and inner-city residents who tend to vote Democrat, were undercounted in 1990. More than four percent of Nevadans were missed in the last census.

Much of the missed-out-on money would have been to programs desperately needed in minority communities, black communities in particular. To ensure traditionally underrepresented communities participate, the Census Bureau launched a \$167 million advertising campaign last year, the first time it has paid to promote the census. The campaign, combined with an aggressive effort to reach traditionally undercounted populations, has census officials excited the potential to increase the response rate.

The census bureau also took other important steps: aggressively marketing the census as a lucrative temporary job for businesspeople; providing the application in multiple languages; using people native to certain areas to go door to door assisting residents with filling out the forms, encouraging schools, churches, shelters and recreational centers to host census sign-ups, recruiting civic organizations to hold registrations and sending enumerators into homeless shelters and public housing projects. Census forms were even made available via cyberspace.

There's an all-out assault to increase mail response rates, which have declined from 78 percent of households in 1970 to 70 percent in 1980 and 65 percent in 1990. Census officials estimate that rate will dip to 61 percent this year, due in part because of apathy and a distrust of the government, according to Census Bureau Director Kenneth Prewitt. Some think many census questions, particularly those on the long form, are too intrusive.

While that may be true, it's time to grit our teeth and bare it. Truth be told, this is not a private a country as we'd like to think. The federal government can literally pull up reams of information on each of us. Like it or not, the paperwork we fill out for purchases, our credit reports, social security number and numerous other identifiers piece together pictures of lives. Big Brother exists. Always has. Probably always will. But privacy isn't the issue here, longevity is. The state needs the money to combat a laundry list of ills — nation-leading dropout and smoking rights, higher-than-average violence, mediocre public schools, pollution, and the list goes on. Nevada needs the money, but are Nevadans going to do what's needed to get it. Time will tell.



Huge worry over ability to transform education

*Professor Sidney Morse
Special to Sentinel-Voice*

In a world in which the rather dramatic increase in the role technology plays in our daily lives has become very apparent, it is clear that the current educational delivery system will be severely challenged in the months and years ahead.

As we transition from a "currency-based" system of exchange to a new "knowledge economy," where the value of one's economic capital is directly connected to what they know, it is not difficult to see that we soon will witness the evolution of "centers of knowledge" as its pillars, just as the financial banking system grew at the beginning of the last century.

These centers will not necessarily be physical in nature, nor will they have to be close to one another. The power of information technology eliminates that requirement.

The shape is more likely to reflect the aggregation of individuals and institutions around a particular societal need, charged with the responsibility of dispensing these new "knowledge" resources to satisfy an economic demand. "Knowledge" will become the "currency" of this new age.

In looking at the current educational system and its role in this "new economy" we get some instructive advice from Dr. Peter

Drucker, in his book, "Managing in a time of Great Change," (Plume, 1995). He suggests that functioning organizations and institutions must develop a theory of the business to guide their mission and keep them connected to the dynamics of the external environment.

This theory determines what you do, for whom you do it, how you do it and how society will reward or pay for it.

In this new economy, education will be called upon to respond to societal needs connected to these knowledge centers, and it is there where the "tension points" in the system will emerge, which will either pay or approve how educational delivery systems get paid — based on their ability to respond.

Education will be challenged to constantly stay in touch with its theory of the business, or to disappear. The rapid and continual pace of change will soon be unkind to systems that do not demonstrate this kind of flexibility.

Right now, there is a significant gap in understanding about who is the ultimate customer in this new paradigm of opportunity.

The decades-long process of institution-building practiced nationwide by our education-delivery systems has resulted in a blurred awareness of whom should be served, and who is paying the bill for service.

Regardless of how much

protection teachers' unions or other special interests connected to education manage to have built into legislation — if they continue failing to meet the demands of these emerging centers, they will not survive.

With the more than 350,000 information technology job openings today and a biotechnology explosion already in progress, there is an overwhelming demand not only for technical skills but also for a general rise in the level of intelligence development to facilitate economic growth in this new knowledge environment.

Will urban delivery systems be able to respond to this growing call, or will they be part of the degradation that causes African-Americans and Latinos to get left further behind?

The current dynamics would certainly suggest a formidable effort is required in the delivery of science and math.

The Internet is already

creating a significant market for creative content-builders, and a demand for efforts to facilitate the development of artistic skills — those that challenge peoples' understanding, not only of the physical world, but of the abstract design of their imagination as well.

Entertainment, particularly the music industry, is but one example of how urban minorities have been able to excel in expressing their talents and will now be challenged to combine that natural and environmental creativity with the addition of knowledge, if they expect to continue to enjoy the fruits of this fertile yet changing industry.

This translates into a need for solid education in literature and in the arts. Demographic projections point to "the graying of America" as the baby-boomers transition into their golden years and increase the need for all types of (See Education, Page 13)

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