



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas K. Duane

Senator Duane Robocalls The Census

THOMAS K. DUANE March 17, 2010

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As Census Questionnaires Hit Mailboxes This Week An Innovative Way to Boost Response Rates

(New York, NY) - On Monday, approximately 98,000 households in State Senator Thomas K. Duane's Manhattan district received a call with at least \$30,000 at stake.

As the 2010 United States Census begins in earnest this week with the mailing of the official ten-question form, Senator Duane took a non-traditional approach to convey the message that being counted makes a big difference. Households throughout his district, which includes the Upper West Side, Hell's Kitchen/Clinton, Chelsea, Greenwich Village and East Side neighborhoods, including the East Village, Stuyvesant Town, Peter Cooper Village and Waterside Plaza, received a recorded call from the Senator asking them to join him in promptly returning their Census form.

“Over the past few months, I and other elected officials, government agencies and community-based organizations have been pulling out all the stops to get the vitally important message out: Completing and returning the Census is enormously important for our communities,” said Senator Duane. “We’ve organized coordinating committees, held informational meetings, enlisted community leaders, sent mailings, emails, newsletters and more, all with the goal of boosting response rates. It occurred to me that

in this age of texting, tweeting and friending, a robocall could cut through the paper and electronic clutter and get the message across.”

The text of Senator Duane’s call clearly lays out what is at stake:

“This is State Senator Tom Duane with an important message about the Census. This week, your household will receive a ten-question United States Census form. I urge you to complete the form to ensure that we receive our share of federal funds for hospitals, schools, transportation and social services. For each person counted, our city and state will receive almost \$30,000 dollars over the next decade. It’s up to each of us to make sure our community counts. Again, this is Senator Tom Duane encouraging you to join me and fill out your census form. Thank you.”

In the 2000 Census, only 60.4% of households in the 29th Senate District returned their forms compared to 63% in New York State as a whole and 67% nationwide. Those who did not do so were called or visited by a Census worker at substantial taxpayer expense. Moreover, despite those additional efforts, many people did not answer their phones or doors - leading to an undercount.

Nationwide, it costs taxpayers, on average, .42 cents to process a mailed response of the Census form compared to \$57 for an in-person visit, according to the United States Census Bureau. Put another way, for every one percent increase in responses sent by mail, taxpayers save \$85 million dollars. Census data determine how congressional and state legislative districts are drawn and apportioned as well as how more than \$400 billion in annual federal funding is distributed.

“This would not have as much impact in a political season, when New Yorkers are being bombarded by such calls,” said Senator Duane. “But I believe this kind of message now will spur some constituents who might have overlooked the mailing to fish it out, fill it in and send it back.”

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