

By Todd Akin -- Over the last few months, I have heard concerns from constituents about the invasive questions being asked by the Census, and these concerns have been echoed across our nation. For this reason, I introduced [H.R. 5046](#) , the Census Clarification & Privacy Act last week which makes clear exactly what information Americans are required to provide to the Census Bureau—specifically, how many individuals are living in their home. All other questions would be optional.

When our Founding Fathers provided for the census in our Constitution, the intent was to create a mechanism to reapportion the seats in the House of Representatives between the various states according to their population. Today, this remains the most important, and the only constitutionally-based purpose of the Census. Unfortunately, legitimate privacy concerns about both the decennial census and the longer American Community Survey have generated talk of individuals not filling out their census forms.

To encourage Americans to respond to the Census and address valid privacy concerns, my bill does two simple things. First, it requires this wording to be placed conspicuously on the front of both types of census forms: “Constitutionally, in responding to this questionnaire, you are only required to provide the number of individuals living in your residence. Answers to all other questions contained within this questionnaire are optional.” Second, my bill amends the law to make it clear that penalties only apply to individuals who refuse to answer this one question or to individuals who falsify information in their response. If enacted, I believe this will protect the privacy of American citizens and encourage all Americans to participate in both forms of the Census. I am currently seeking cosponsors and hope to build support to move this bill through Congress to the President.

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