CENSUS TAKERS

It’s almost time for the 2020 Census to begin and associations may find census takers seeking access to the community or information regarding its occupants. Households will receive an invitation to respond to the 2020 Census between March 12-20. If a household does not respond to the 2020 Census, a census taker may follow up in person to collect their response. This will occur between May-July.

Then comes the question – must associations grant census takers access to the community to gather information from occupants? In short, yes.

13 U.S. Code Section 223 provides:

Whoever, being the owner, proprietor, manager, superintendent, or agent of any hotel, apartment house, boarding or lodging house, tenement, or other building, refuses or willfully neglects, when requested . . . to furnish the names of the occupants . . . or to give free ingress thereto and egress therefrom to any duly accredited [census taker] . . . shall be fined not more than $500.

An association is required to cooperate with census takers and cannot deny access into the community or giving the names of the occupants of the premises to any census taker who has shown proper identification. Failure to grant access to the community or furnish names of occupants requested by a census taker may result in substantial fines. The association may utilize whatever security measures it has in place (e.g., call resident and announce visitor). It will be up to an individual resident if they choose to open their door or not.

Associations residents can and should require evidence that the person is an official census taker. All census takers will be issued a census badge, which includes their name, photograph, Department of Commerce watermark, and an expiration date. Community Association Managers, patrol staff, or homeowners may ask to see a census taker’s badge. When in doubt, contact the nearest Regional Census Center to verify a census taker’s status. https://www.census.gov/about/regions/los-angeles/contact/identify.html

In order to comply with federal regulations, make sure your Community Association Managers, patrol staff, and gate and lobby attendants (if any) understand that access must be granted to census takers. They are allowed to knock on doors, ring doorbells, use call boxes, etc. Also, census takers are within their rights to ask associations to verify occupancy information (e.g., name and address). While you’re not expected to supply the information immediately, you should provide the requested name and address within a reasonable amount of time.

Please be aware that there is no requirement to provide any information to a census taker over the phone. If the association receives a phone call from a person claiming to be a census taker requesting occupancy information the association should not provide such information over the phone.