



Queens Borough President Helen Marshall urges residents to fill out the census forms being mailed to them this week. Photo by Anna Gustafson

## Mayor urges boro to fill out Census forms

*By Anna Gustafson  
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Mayor Michael Bloomberg and an entourage of city and borough officials urged Queens residents to fill out the census forms coming their way this week in order to land more federal funding for a borough that has experienced a population increase in the past decade.

"The city's diversity defines and strengthens us in so many ways, but it also presents obstacles to getting an accurate census count," Bloomberg said at the building that houses Flushing International High School and JHS 189 Tuesday. "Our population is harder to count than anywhere else in the nation due to language barriers and fears about privacy."

At a census kick-off event at Borough Hall Monday, Queens Borough President Helen Marshall said she hopes government and non-profit officials' escalated efforts to reach out to Queens residents about the census will result in a better participation rate than the borough had in the 2000 census. About 54 percent of borough residents completed the census questionnaire 10 years ago, less than the national average of 67 percent.

"They say we have 2.2 million people in Queens," Marshall said. "So many more people have come here since the last census, and we need to change that number... I want the number to be a real reflection of the people here."

The federal census, conducted once a decade, will determine how many billions of dollars the city will receive in federal aid and the number of New York delegates in the U.S. House of Representatives. Census forms were mailed to city residents this week, and individuals are expected to send the 10-question form in before April 15.

S.J. Jung, president of the Minkwon Center for Community Action in Flushing; Councilman Peter Koo (R-Flushing); Schools Chancellor Joel Klein; and city census coordinator Stacey Cumberbatch joined the mayor at Tuesday's event, and they all stressed that information collected in the census process will remain confidential.

Jung said no one, including undocumented immigrants, should be worried about giving information to the government.

“People are especially concerned in this current political climate,” Jung said. “Almost 390,000 immigrants are being deported each year. We understand immigrants are afraid, and there are very serious concerns on the part of immigrants, but the information is confidential. The census is safe.”

Marshall formed a census committee in November that has since reached out to individuals, especially immigrant populations, to emphasize the importance of the census. Individuals have gone door-to-door, handed out pamphlets and spoken with neighborhood leaders about the 2010 census.

Along with the census committee, Marshall has enlisted the help of her task force on immigration and the borough's 14 community boards in an attempt to dramatically increase participation in the census.

“The census form is 10 questions,” said Patricia Valle, assistant regional census manager. “It's the shortest form we've ever had. There are no questions about immigrant status or Social Security numbers. It's very easy.”

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