

# Church groups push census participation

By Laurie Hansen  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Two hundred years after this fledgling nation first surveyed itself, the 1990 census is at hand, and church groups have joined in the numbers game.

For good reason, government and church officials agree.

"It's the only numbers game in town," said Ray Bancroft, a Census Bureau spokesman. "Forty billion dollars in federal money alone is distributed based on census information. A similar amount is distributed by states based on the same information."

"Say a city gets \$150 per person from the federal government each year. You just have to multiply that by 10 (years) to see (what) the loss there would be if one person isn't counted," he said Feb. 8. Census numbers are used for 10 years until the next count is taken.

Church leaders — especially those who work with the urban poor — have come to realize that census numbers dictate which areas need schools and social-service programs, and how well these services are funded. In addition, the count determines the number of congressional representatives a state is allocated and the way in which state and local districts are drawn.

The Census Bureau has eagerly accepted involvement by churches because of the inroads they have among the poor, especially recent immigrants and African-Americans, said Joe A. Cortez, chief of census awareness at the Census Bureau.

Illegal aliens, newcomers who do not speak English, and families living in garages and vans are those the government has traditionally found it most difficult to reach.

Laurie Vega, director of the Spanish Apostolate for the Archdiocese of Baltimore, said that a "serious undercount" of Hispanics in Baltimore in the last two census counts meant a "lack of awareness of the Hispanic population here. Politicians felt they didn't have to deal with Hispanics."

She said she tells local Hispanics "if you don't let yourself be counted, you won't count."

Baltimoreans seem to be taking her words to heart. Every other Wednesday, some 20 Hispanic women belonging to the archdiocese's Hispanic Women's Self-Help Group pound the pavement in southeast Baltimore to alert their Spanish-speaking neighbors of the need to participate in the upcoming census.

In addition, Vega's office will become a census-assistance center for people who have problems filling out census forms because they don't speak English.

Father Jaime Soto, chairman of the community outreach committee of the Complete Count Committee in Santa Ana, Calif., said participation there is crucial because the statistics will confirm the "very serious shortage of low-income housing" in Orange County, known for its high cost of living. The count, he said, will reveal that three and four families are forced to reside in many one-family homes.

At the national level too, the church is taking action. The U.S. bishops' Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs has sponsored two workshops in the past year —

one in Arlington, Va., and the other in Albuquerque, N.M. — to develop strategies to ensure the counting of as many Hispanics as possible.

To spread the word, the church is working through the immense network of Hispanic Catholics it developed during the Third National Hispanic Pastoral Encuentro process, in which small groups of Hispanic Catholics met to establish a national pastoral plan.

Beverly Carroll, director of the U.S. bishops' Secretariat for Black Catholics, said she has encouraged pastors of

predominantly African-American parishes to make their churches available as census training sites.

"The parish is one of the few institutions seen as an advocate for the people. People are still skeptical about giving personal information to any non-community person (because) they have so many problems with (the departments of) housing and social services," Carroll commented.

It appears that Hispanics, in particular, could benefit from an accurate count in 1990.

Continued on page 7



AIRPORT NEWS CONFERENCE — President George Bush answers U.S. reporters' questions upon his arrival Feb. 15 at Barranquilla airport in Columbia.

## Cardinal admits catechism still needs revisions

ROME (CNS) — The draft universal catechism is a "marvelous work," but needs revision because it is still "imperfect," said Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Vatican's doctrinal congregation.

During a Feb. 15 question-and-answer session at the University of Rome, Cardinal Ratzinger said that the Vatican-appointed committee supervising preparation of the document, which he also heads, is conducting a "major consultation" with the world's bishops before re-

vising the catechism.

The drafting of a universal catechism as a reference point for the writing of local catechisms was a recommendation of the 1985 extraordinary Synod of Bishops. Pope John Paul II has said he would like to have the catechism finished during 1990, the 25th anniversary of the end of the Second Vatican Council.

The draft has been sent to bishops' conferences and to each bishop, said Cardinal Ratzinger.

The committee wants suggestions from and Utah — to propose legislation limiting abortion as a means of birth control.

Another bill in the package would require parental consent with a "judicial bypass" provision. A third bill would require physicians performing abortions to file reports, while the final bill would set standards and guidelines for abortion clinics.

Those bills, as well as an "omnibus abortion bill" sponsored by abortion rights lawmakers, Lawless said, were to be given a joint hearing by committees in both houses of the state Legislature Feb. 28.

In West Virginia, bills were awaiting committee action that would ban public funding, mandate informed consent, and deal with fathers' rights, according to Mark Welsh, communications director for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

As of Feb. 19, no bills had yet been signed into law in any state this year. Last October, Pennsylvania became the first state in the country to enact abortion restrictions following the Webster decision, but in mid-January a federal judge blocked sections of the law.

bishops' organizations as a body and "responses of individuals on the basis of their personal experience," he said.

"While leaving the way open for correcting and bettering the text, according to me, it is already a work of notable quality," he said.

Also during the Feb. 15 session, Cardinal Ratzinger discussed church teaching on the justification for war. He said nuclear weapons require the development of a new criteria that safeguards the right of self-defense while taking into consideration the destructive power of atomic-age arms.

The cardinal did not offer criteria. "A simple answer does not exist," he said.

Some people justify going to war to defend an ethical system, he said.

"But destroying with nuclear weapons entire cities, etc., is no longer defending an ethical system," he said.

The cardinal also criticized "a completely pacifist position, in the sense that war should be simply excluded."

## Show to aid scholarships

ROCHESTER — The Catholic Women's Club is presenting a luncheon and fashion show on March 3 at 11:30 a.m. at the Holiday Inn on Jefferson Road. Proceeds from the event will be used to fund scholarships for needy girls attending Catholic high schools.

Tickets are \$18 per person and can be obtained by calling Eleanor Heier, 716/223-6430, or by calling the club, 461-9173, Monday-Friday, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

## States

Continued from page 5

tors who perform abortions. The law had been made unenforceable after the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, which allowed abortion on demand.

In Alabama Feb. 14, a House committee recommended to the full House a bill limiting abortions as a means of birth control. The National Right to Life Committee said in a Feb. 19 statement that the action was the first committee vote on such a measure to take place in any state.

On the other side of the coin, the New Hampshire House of Representatives voted Feb. 13 to allow abortions until the 25th week of pregnancy.

The bill would also permit abortions after six months if the mother's health or life were in danger or if it were determined that the baby had a life-threatening abnormality.

Gov. Judd Gregg was expected to veto the measure.

Attempts to pass a parental-consent law

in Virginia were placed in doubt when the state Senate's Rules Committee voted Feb. 14 to send the bill to a hostile Senate panel. The Virginia House had already passed the legislation.

The abortion debate has yet to heat up in some state legislatures.

The Indiana Senate was expected Feb. 20 to vote on an informed-consent bill, which Gov. Evan Bayh is expected to sign, according to Indiana Right to Life president Nadia Shloss.

Less certain for passage and a governor's signature, Shloss said, is a second bill that would require viability testing for fetuses and ban abortions performed at public facilities. No date has been set for a vote on the measure.

In Maryland, pro-life forces have introduced four bills, according to Curry Lawless, associate director of the Maryland Catholic Conference.

One bill would ban birth-control and sex-selection abortions, and would mandate viability testing and informed consent. According to the National Right to Life Committee, Maryland would be the fifth state — after Alabama, Idaho, Minnesota