

INS shouldn't ignore law to boost census numbers

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Body

CENSUS 2000 forms began arriving Monday, the same day the Immigration and Naturalization Service released a memo warning its agents **in** the field that illegal immigrants are off-limits through August.

To avoid scaring immigrants away from **Census** 2000, "**INS** enforcement operations that may result **in** large **numbers** of arrests, other than standard patrols of the border and public transportation facilities, should not be planned **in** residential areas during **Census** 2000 enumeration," said the memo.

JOURNALAgency officials say this includes some work-site enforcement operations that **INS** routinely conducts to discourage the hiring of undocumented immigrants.

Without a doubt, the **census** needs to be conducted unhindered. Public service announcements and publications are everywhere, **in** numerous languages, urging residents both legal and illegal to stand up and be counted, reminding all of the purpose of the **census** and reassuring them of the confidentiality of responses.

Even if the **INS** wants to help the **Census** Bureau achieve its goals, though, is it ever appropriate for a government agency to publicize that it will stand by and allow **laws** to be broken?

Since the agency rarely conducts raids nowadays, and hardly ever **in** residential areas, this wasn't necessary. We've already criticized the agency for announcing last year that it would scale back workplace raids and instead target smuggling operations and criminal immigrants. Until immigration **law** is changed, it is the obligation of the **INS** to enforce the **laws** at all times and under all circumstances.

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