Low Southern Census Returns Prompt Increased Media Push

N.C. legislators will use the census to draft new election districts, which will impact the state's political future.

By Jessica Chism

Low response rates in the South for the 2000 Census prompted officials to use paid advertising for the first time in the history of the census.

Proponents of the census stressed its importance, saying it would have long-lasting effects on the state's politics, economy and schools.

The new radio and TV ads launched Wednesday emphasize the need for residents to fill out census forms, as these let the government know how much money to allocate for initiatives such as child care and firefighting equipment.

Jennifer Marks, advertising director for the Census Bureau, said the response rate had dropped consistently nationwide in the past three censuses, and a mail survey that was sent out in 1995 received an extremely low response.

So far, the census bureau has only received a 51 percent response from N.C. residents since the census was released earlier this year - one of the lowest response rates in the South.

"It is because of this trend that we decided to turn to paid advertising,"

Marks said that in the past the census bureau had relied solely on public ser-vice announcements to publicize the census. "The problem with public service announcements is that you have no control over when the message runs,"

"With the paid advertisements, we know when they are running and what type of audience is hearing the mes-"The problem with public

lower response rates, and this year was

As of Tuesday, the response rates in North Carolina, Texas, Georgia and Florida were all under the national aver-

age of 55 percent.

UNC political science Professor
Thad Beyle said there were several the-

ories on why the response rates were

ower in the South.
"There are always different explana

She added that

states in the South

traditionally had

service announcements is that The Census Bureau is running you have no control over ads in 12 states, focusing mainly on when the message runs." the South, Marks

JENNIFER MARKS Census Bureau Advertising Director

tions," Beyle said. "The amount of rural areas in Southern states, the high concentration of minorities and the misunderstanding of the purpose of a census are all factors

Marks and Beyle both emphasized the importance of the 2000 census.
Beyle said the redistricting of North

Carolina's legislative districts, which is dependent on the results of the census, could have a significant impact on the politics of the state.

"Whichever party controls the legislature at the time the redistricting takes place will use the informa-tion to their advantage," Beyle said.
"The results of the 2000 elections will be very impor-tant."

Marks said the majority of Americans did not realize that the census dictated w federal funds were allocated.

'These new radio ads emphasize the effects of the census on federal funding," she said. "For example, the amount of money given to the state for education is affected by the responses of the census.'

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State, Nation and World

Judge Lifts Gag Orders In Fla. Smokers Case

MIAMI – A decision lifting a gag order that kept parties from talking about a landmark tobacco trial for 18 months didn't get lawyers in the case talking Thursday during the second day of deliberations.

'I don't know the effect of it, frankly," Circuit Judge Robert Kaye said of the federal ruling late

Wednesday reversing his trial gag order. Kaye received the ruling Thursday morning and hadn't read the full 20page opinion before jurors came into court to resume their deliberations on a \$13.2 million damage claim by three smokers with cancer.

Kaye said he planned no additional

comment on the reversal.

News media lawyers and Philip Morris, one of the defendants, wel-comed the decision by U.S. District Judge Adalberto Jordan, who rejected the gag as unconstitutional but said Kaye could impose a less-restrictive

But attorneys in the case declined comment, a routine practice during deliberations, whether a gag order is in place or not.

Frank Amodeo, Mary Farnan and the late Angie Della Vecchia want the jury to say smoking was the legal cause of their cancers and force the nation's five biggest cigarette makers to pay their actual and intangible losse

Elian's Father Sets Foot On U.S. Soil to See Son

WASHINGTON - On U.S. soil, Juan Miguel Gonzalez said Thursday he was "truly impatient" to reclaim his son Elian, but his hopes for an orderly transfer of custody were dimmed when government negotiations with the 6-year-old Cuban boy's Miami relatives broke

The father declared his love for son Elian and chastised those who are trying "to obtain political advantage" from the custody battle over the shipwreck sur-

He received immediate assurances that the U.S. government is eager to reunite him with his son. "It is simply the right thing to do," said Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder. "The father and his son need to be together."

But Jose Garcia-Pedrosa, the attorney for the relatives with whom Elian has been staying since November, said the negotiations with the government were over, primarily because the government refused to promise that they wouldn't "take Elian away in the middle of the

He also said immigration officials refused to agree to a psychological eval-uation determining whether Elian should be handed over to his father.

"He has not had his day in court," Garcia-Pedrosa said. "This is a very, very sad day."

A Justice Department official stopped short of saying the talks were over. "We are disappointed that the attor-neys for the Miami relatives insisted on relitigating the issue of whether Elian should be returned to his father as opposed to how to carry that transfer out in the most appropriate manner,' said one official, who spoke on condi-

Get Out! Seinfeld Preps For Fatherhood Foray

NEW YORK – Imagine Jerry Seinfeld inside his Long Island mansion, baby bottle in one hand, burp cloth in the other, musing: Whyyyyy do they call it a burp cloth?

That's right. First came love (1998), then came marriage (last December) — and now Seinfeld and bride, Jessica Sklar, will soon be pushing a baby car-

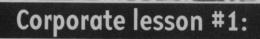
The big announcement was made Thursday by Seinfeld pal Regis Philbin on TV's "Live With Regis and Kathie

"Yes. It's true. There will be a new little Seinfeld sometime this fall," said Seinfeld's spokeswoman, Elizabeth

It is the first child for both Sklar and Seinfeld, who made millions from a TV show that glorified single life and poked

That was then and this is now, and soon the 45-year-old Seinfeld will be up to his diaper bag in commitment

Associated Press



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OR

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nation, child abuse is underreported by 66 percent, and this number does not

even include child neglect."

Keynote speaker Marcia HermanGiddens, a child maltreatment consultant at UNC, talked about the ways in which the children were killed.

"These kids did not die easily many were smothered or received bru-tal physical punishment," she said. Composer Pamela St. John recited a poem titled "Inner Children" written by

Paula Johnson and performed an original sonata, titled "Connections."

"The piece is mostly autobiographical," she said. "Parts of the sections are painful, and show that this type of trauma causes parts of yourself to be shut out from each other."

After the ceremony, everyone in attendance took a lighted candle and

marched over to the courthouse, singing "This Little Light of Mine." Giddens said the issue had not

received enough attention at the 'Very little attention is given to this

issue at UNC, especially at the medical school," she said. "It is also very telling that the federal government still isn't providing any leadership in finding the number of child abuse fatalities."

Giddens said that while child abuse was often difficult to talk about, people needed to address it more.

"Child abuse is unpleasant - no one wants to think about it or take a look at it," she said. "But keeping it invisible will never bring it to the forefront."

> The City Editor can be reached at citydesk@unc.edu.

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