

By ROBERT PIERCE

- Daily Leader

Every 10 years, officials from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Census Bureau take a count of the number of people living in the country.

This year, the bureau will begin mailing out forms starting March 15 with a completion date of March 20. Census day is April 1, and officials with the regional U.S. Census office in Dodge City are looking for people to help with the count.

Partnership specialist Eloy Gallegos said for Seward County, about 200 more workers are needed to help with the census.

Gallegos was in Liberal Thursday to discuss that issue, along with the formation of a "Complete Count Committee." He said an accurate count of individuals is needed not only in Seward County, but across the entire state.

Gallegos said he would like to engage every single individual in the community to become aware and educated of the census and how the census count affects funds, as well as how the city, county and school district works.

Gallegos said based on census data, the federal government issues an allocation of \$400 billion nationwide.

“It also helps with planning on a regional basis through your state, your county and your school districts,” he said. “School districts use this information to know how many teachers they’re going to need for a certain grade. It not only works on Congressional redistricting, but state redistricting.”

Compared to past years, Gallegos said forms for the 2010 Census are much simpler.

“It’s now only 10 questions, compared to 2000, when it was anywhere from 50 to 75 to 100 questions,” he said. “We’re trying to make it as easy as possible. I really do believe we can get a mail back response of up to 80 to 90 percent just because it’s that much easier.”

Past forms have included information about economic status. Gallegos said those facts are now obtained elsewhere.

“We now have an American Community Survey that sends out a questionnaire every month to 300,000 households in the United States,” he said.

Gallegos explained the concept of a Complete Count Committee.

“A Complete Count Committee, or a Community Awareness Campaign, is a team of community leaders appointed by the highest-elected official to develop and implement a locally-based outreach and awareness campaign for the 2010 census,” he said.

He added census workers can make as much as \$10 to \$13 an hour and can work as little as five hours a week. The hours worked will be flexible with other work schedules.

For information about how to help with the Census, call the Dodge City office at (620) 805-3270.

