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## U.S. Census participation could mean \$5 billion for Rock Island County

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By Anthony Watt, awatt@qconline.com

The message was simple: the U.S. Census equals money.

City officials from across the Quad-Cities came together Wednesday morning to push that message, encouraging residents to fill out and mail in the census forms that are starting to arrive.

"Fill it out," Rock Island County board chairman Jim Bohnsack said. "Get it in there as quickly as you can."

Participation could mean about \$5 billion in federal funding for Rock Island County over the next 10 years, officials have said. That includes money for schools, roads and veterans.

"There's a huge amount of money we can use," Mr. Bohnsack said Wednesday.

Mr. Bohnsack added that census data is used for determining how much representation a state has in the U. S. House of Representatives.

Rock Island Mayor Dennis Pauley said the money a city gets because of the census is money it does not have to get another way--like raising fees.

Mr. Bohnsack said anyone who mails it in can avoid census takers showing up at their door.

"I don't want anyone knocking on my door," he said.

The questionnaire will have 10 questions and should take about 10 minutes to complete. Along with name and address, census questions include phone numbers, race, ethnicity and gender.

If they do show up, people surveying for the census will have identification and will only ask



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**Photo: Todd Mizener**

Jim Bohnsack, Rock Island County Board Chairman, right, Don Welvaert, Mayor of Moline and Dennis Pauley, Mayor of Rock Island, left, are all smiles during a press conference organized to point out the importance of area residents filling out their 2010 Census forms. Mr. Bohnsack is holding a check for over a billion dollars, the estimated amount of money from the federal government which benefited the residents of Rock Island County. Local officials wanted to stress that achieving an accurate and complete Census count not only means our area will be accurately represented legislatively, but also results in more federal dollars for the region.

specific questions related to the census, Mr. Bohnsack said.

"Here's my card. Here I am. Please fill this out," he said.

That does not include personal information like social security numbers, Mr. Bohnsack said.

Residents encountering anyone claiming to be surveying for the census that asks for personal information should call the police, Mr. Bohnsack warned.

Other ways Quad-Cities communities have been encouraging participation in the survey include adding census pages to their Web sites and billboards in both English and Spanish.

There will also be "Be Counted" locations for people who do not receive or lose census forms. For details about the sites, call (866) 872-6868. Spanish callers may dial (866) 928-2010.

People can also get more information by going to the U.S. Census Web site:  
<http://www.census.gov/> .