

Officials Won't Delay Raids on Immigrants for Census

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In contrast to the months before and after the 2000 census was conducted, federal officials say they will not suspend raids on illegal immigrants during the population count in 2010.

“We would not even consider scaling back our efforts,” said Pat A. Reilly, a spokeswoman for the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency. The census counts all residents, legal and illegal.

This month, Preston Jay Waite, the Census Bureau’s deputy director, cautioned in an interview that raids during the population count would further discourage an already distrustful group from cooperating with government enumerators. Mr. Waite said federal officials did not conduct raids for several months before and after the 2000 census.

Given how politically volatile an issue immigration has become, however, Mr. Waite was quoted by The Associated Press as saying that enforcement agencies “may not be able to give us as much of a break” in 2010.

The Pew Hispanic Center has estimated that in 2005 nearly half of the 16 million foreign-born Hispanics living in the United States were here illegally.

Jeffrey S. Passel, a senior research associate at the center, said the bureau did an effective job of reaching out to Hispanics in 2000, in part by emphasizing the confidentiality of the census. The count that year was higher than anticipated.

“We’re in a different climate right now,” Mr. Passel said. “It would be much more difficult to take the census and get the same degree of cooperation.”

This week, C. Louis Kincannon, the Census Bureau’s director, said that the bureau had not asked federal agencies to refrain from enforcing immigration laws in 2010 and that any such request would be premature.

“While previous administrations sought to have law enforcement raids curtailed somewhat to help obtain greater accuracy, we respect I.C.E.’s statement that they will not suspend raids,” Mr. Kincannon said.

He added that the bureau would “rely heavily on trusted individuals and organizations within hard-to-count populations to partner with us to increase public awareness that it’s important and safe to participate in the 2010 census.”