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Threatened by the Census Bureau

by Gary D. Barnett

I just received an official letter from the U.S. Department of Commerce threatening me with prosecution and fines if I do not comply with its Economic Census. The letter came from the Office of the General Counsel/Office of the Chief Counsel for Economic Affairs in Washington, D.C., and was sent to me by Roxie J. Jones, chief counsel for economic affairs. This sounds not only important but serious! When I failed to properly respond to the state of Montana's request for my business economic information, I had no idea that matters would go this far.

The official charge is "Failure to Provide Mandatory 2007 Economic Census Report." Apparently, the state of Montana reported my failure to comply to the U.S. Census Bureau, and it in turn reported me to the U.S. Department of Commerce. I assume that is the proper "chain of command" for such matters. The letter began, "The U.S. Census Bureau, an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce, has informed me [Roxie] that your company has failed to report information for the 2007 Economic Census."

A threat follows based on Title 13 of the U.S. Code (U.S.C.), Sections 131 and 224. The letter requires that my company furnish this census information, and if it is not forthcoming, the responsible official of the business (that would be yours truly) will be subject to prosecution, with penalties up to \$5,000. Miss Jones was even so kind as to put the provisions of the law in question on the back of my letter so that I would know just what she could do to me if I told her department once again to take a hike. My earlier response must have agitated someone in high office.

The letter went on to tell me how essential to business and government decision-making my compliance was.

The information requested is a major source of detailed information about the nation's economy and the foundation for most measures of economic performance, including the Gross Domestic Product. Conducted every five years, the Economic Census uses information from businesses like mine to provide reliable data for my industry and geographic area.

Wow! And to think I thought they just wanted to harass me and delve into private matters that are none of their business!

I guess they are in a hurry to help the economy because the letter said that if I did not comply “within 15 days” my case would be submitted to the U.S. Department of Justice for further action. Now there were four government agencies, one state and three federal, involved in this terribly important action. I’m so glad that my tax dollars are able to assist them in this venture to shore up the U.S. economy.

James Bovard, in his article “[Census Bureau: A Threat to Freedom.](#)” clearly outlined the dangerous nature of this corrupt government agency. He discussed the only census mandated by the Constitution, that being a simple head count every ten years. No economic census was mentioned in his article, but why should it have been? There simply is no constitutional mandate for any census other than a pure head count. Where in the Constitution does it state that a department of commerce can force anyone who owns a business to give it any and all information it desires under threat of force? I can tell you: it doesn’t! And why can’t the department just coordinate with other government bureaucracies and get all the information about my business that it wants? Heck, they already know everything there is to know!

As Bovard correctly pointed out, the Census Bureau has a shoddy record of keeping information that it gathers private. In other words, it cannot be trusted with any information. Not only could private information become not so private, but it could be used against the very folks supplying their personal information to this corrupt government agency.

This is just one more unwarranted and unconstitutional invasion into the private affairs of all. These invasions are growing worse and are never-ending in nature. The decline of freedom in this country continues precipitately. And the force behind this loss of liberty is growing — much like a cancer. As our liberties decrease, so the government’s police-force power increases. This is natural, but time is running out to stop the cancerous growth we call government oppression!

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