

BY WILLIAM H. FREY

# While most of the forms have already been mailed in, we won't

get the first results from the 2010 Census until December. But we can speculate: It's quite likely that the total U.S. population has reached 309 million, just four decades after we tipped the 200-million mark.

Of course, the main purpose of the Census is to reapportion Congressional seats. In 1970, the Snow Belt states held 225 seats, compared to 210 for the Southern and Western states of the Sun Belt. A decade later, this 15-seat advantage turned into a 19-seat shortfall – and by 2000 had morphed into a whopping 69-seat deficit. Richard Nixon's 1968 "southern strategy" for Republicans looks brilliant in hindsight.

The 1980 and 1990 censuses greatly rewarded the mega-states – Florida, California and Texas – at the expense of hollowed-out industrial behemoths New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois and Michigan. Thereafter, the Sun Belt diversified: Arizona and Georgia shared multiple seat gains with standbys Florida and Texas in 2000, while California's take dropped to one.

Texas will likely win four seats in 2010 – at least one of which will come at the expense of Louisiana (heck of a job, Brownie). California, by contrast, stands to come up empty for the first time. And, thanks to the housing bust, Florida and Arizona will likely eke out just one seat each. All told, the Sun Belt will prob-



ably stretch its House margin to 89.

Time – and political power – are thus still marching south. Just how that will play out in terms of public policy is unclear. What is clear, though, is that the money follows the marchers: Some \$400 billion in federal goodies are handed out annually on the basis of census statistics. **M**

MICHAELA MURPHY/TXDOT



**BILL FREY** is a senior fellow in demography at the Milken Institute and visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington.

