

It's census time. And if you're a same-sex married couple, there may be an unpleasant surprise in how the Census Bureau treats your marriage.

When same-sex married couples send in their forms this year they will of course mark themselves off as "married." Incredibly, that designation will be changed by someone at the Census Bureau to "unmarried partners." The Census Bureau is taking it upon itself to change an honest answer into its own interpretation.

By the end of this year, marriage equality will be the law in at least six states. This is an important change since the last time the Census was conducted. Unfortunately, the growing number of legally-recognized same-sex couples will be intentionally uncounted in the 2010 census.

The practice is based on the indefensible "Defense of Marriage Act." Some argue that this discriminatory law's prohibition on federal recognition of same sex marriage also prevents the Census from reporting the truthful answers of American citizens. That's profoundly wrong! The Census does not reflect a policy, it reflects sheer numbers. Americans answering a questionnaire and the Census Bureau recording those answers doesn't endorse or oppose a policy. It simply tells the truth.

I've led fifty of my House colleagues in a letter to the Administration asking that that the Census Bureau reconsider its current policy and not falsify the data Americans report to them about their lives.

I'm proud of what Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut and Vermont have done for marriage equality. I hope that my home state of New York will soon follow. Same-sex couples are a part of our communities. Their marriage licenses are no less legal than my own. And when the Census starts its counting in 2010, they deserve to be treated and counted the same way as every other legally married couple.

The Census Bureau has an obligation to collect and report data. Not collect and alter data.