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**U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT,
GOVERNMENT INFORMATION, FEDERAL SERVICES, AND
INTERNATIONAL SECURITY**

HEARING: "Census: Learning Lessons from 2010, Planning for 2020"

WASHINGTON – Today, Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.), Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, convened the hearing, "Census: Learning Lessons from 2010, Planning for 2020." The purpose of the hearing was to identify lessons learned from the 2010 Census, identify technological advances that can be used to improve data quality and reexamine areas that could help produce a more cost-effective 2020 Census.

For more information on the hearing or to watch a webcast of the hearing, please click [HERE](#).

A copy of Sen. Carper's remarks, as prepared for delivery, follows:

"Today's hearing will examine lessons learned from the 2010 Census while identifying initiatives that show promise for producing an even more accurate and more cost-effective census in 2020.

"I would like to begin by congratulating Dr. Groves, his predecessor, Dr. Murdock, and the career professionals at the Census Bureau who did an outstanding job in carrying out the 2010 Census. As a result of their hard work, the Census Bureau was able to overcome a number of operational and organizational challenges, including shortcomings with critical information technology systems. The Bureau completed key operations on schedule, hired nearly 900,000 temporary workers, obtained an acceptable participation rate of 74 percent and managed to report its population figures in time to support redistricting.

"Despite these achievements, the 2010 Census was the most expensive in the nation's history

by far, even taking inflation into account. The total cost of decennial operations escalated from an initial estimate of \$11.3 billion to around \$13 billion. Even more disturbing is the fact that, with all the modern scientific improvements and technological advancements that have been made over the years, the framework for conducting the 2010 Census was based off of a model we used in the 1970's.

"Although the methodological basics of the census have remained the same over the past 40 years, the cost of the census has decidedly not. The average cost per household was \$98 in 2010, compared to \$70 in 2000 and \$16 in 1970. And I've been told that the total cost of the 2020 Census could rise to as much as \$30 billion. This, in my view, is not acceptable. It's especially not acceptable at a time when we're struggling to find solutions to the serious deficit and debt crises our country is currently facing.

"I've spoken at previous hearings about the need for us to look in every nook and cranny of the federal government – domestic, defense, and entitlements spending, along with tax expenditures – and ask this question, "Is it possible to get better results for less money?" The hard truth is that many programs' funding levels will need to be reduced. Even some of the most popular and necessary programs out there will likely be asked to do more with less. The Census Bureau, despite the vital and constitutionally-mandated nature of its work, cannot be immune from this sort of examination.

"While most Americans want us to reduce the deficit, determining the best path forward will not be easy. Many believe that those of us here in Washington aren't capable of doing the hard work we were hired to do – that is, to effectively manage the tax dollars they entrust us with. They look at the spending decisions we've made in recent years and question whether the culture here is broken. They question whether we're capable of making the kind of tough decisions they and their families make with their own budgets. I don't blame them for being skeptical. And I'm afraid that their skepticism proved to be well-founded when looking at the kind of avoidable management failures that contributed to the growth in cost of carrying out the 2010 Census.

"Today, we will look at the Bureau's planning efforts for the 2020 decennial, and although it's nine years away, it's never too early to start to thinking about ways to reduce costs and improve quality through more efficient data collection. More importantly, we need to make certain that the issues that lead to the failures and cost overruns we saw in recent years have been addressed and will not reoccur. Taxpayers should not be expected to pick up the tab for them again.

"Looking ahead, the Bureau's research should focus on how existing technology can be incorporated into the 2020 design. Obviously, the internet is here to stay and, according to experts, an internet response option could have saved the Bureau tens of millions of dollars in processing costs in 2010. Future research should not only focus on how to implement internet data collection, but also on how to reap the benefits – financial and otherwise – of it and other technologies the next time around. We also need to make certain that the people

who make up our growing and changing country are comfortable enough with the security of the data collection methods we use to allow for an accurate census.

"Moreover, steady leadership will also be critical in reversing a trend of decennial censuses marked by poor planning and escalating costs. The 2010 Census experienced several changes in leadership and vast spans of time with acting or interim Directors, further putting the operation at risk. In the 27 months leading up to Census Day, the Bureau had three different Directors. I plan to introduce legislation this year that would, among other things, make the Director of the Census Bureau a Presidential Term appointment of five years. A fixed term would help avoid leadership gaps during critical decennial census planning stages and facilitate the longer-term planning so vital to decennial censuses.

"Senator Coburn and I introduced legislation last year to establish a term appointment for the Census Director and to make a number of other changes at the Bureau aimed at preventing serious problems in the future. It passed the Senate unanimously but failed in the House. I'd like to work with Dr. Groves to make whatever changes are necessary to put together something that addresses the lessons learned from 2010 and can again enjoy bipartisan support in Congress.

"I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today, who will help us to identify ways to best balance the need for an accurate census, with the need to ensure a reasonable cost for this endeavor."

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