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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: Planning Ahead for 2020"**

**Opening Statement of Senator Tom Carper, Chairman**  
*As prepared for delivery*

Today's hearing will examine lessons learned from the 2010 Census while identifying initiatives that show promise for producing an even more accurate and cost-effective census in 2020. I would like to begin by thanking Dr. Groves for his commitment to public service and his willingness to help the Bureau navigate through such challenging times. I must admit the news of his decision to leave his post of Census Bureau Director is bittersweet.

When Dr. Groves came on board in 2009, the Census Bureau faced many challenges that threatened the success of the 2010 Census. Dr. Groves, along with his dedicated staff, confronted these challenges head on and through his impressive skill set and background in issues related to the Census and to statistics, he helped right the ship, ensuring the completion of the 2010 Census.

Under his leadership, 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. The Bureau has also realigned its national field office structure and implemented key management reforms, reducing costs by an estimated \$15 million to \$18 million annually beginning in 2014. Three years after his arrival, Dr. Groves definitely leaves the Census Bureau in better shape than when he found it.

However, 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 first used in the 1970s.

Although the methodological basics of the census have remained the same over the past forty years, the cost of the census has decidedly not. The average cost per household was \$97 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 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 need 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.

Today, we will look at the Bureau's planning efforts for the 2020 decennial. Although it's eight years away, it's never too early to start to think 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 the last time around 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.

Dr. Groves undoubtedly leaves some very big shoes to fill, but it is imperative that we get someone just as good in place as soon as possible so that we can avoid the operational and management challenges that plagued prior decennials. 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.