

*Opening Statement Chairman Tom Coburn  
Hearing on the 2010 Census  
July 17, 2007*

I would like to thank Chairman Carper for holding this hearing today to follow up on the important issues we jointly raised last year at a separate hearing.

The 2010 Census is fast approaching and will be here sooner than we all think. But, I believe that if we can address the most pressing issues soon there is still time to ensure that we have a successful, cost-effective census.

I continue to be concerned, though, about a number of persistent issues that the Bureau will continue to ignore at its own peril. Particularly, I am deeply worried that the cost continues to rise and is now estimated to be \$11.5 billion, or \$200 million more than at last year's hearing.

As it stands, if the final cost of the census does not rise even one dollar above current estimates, it will still cost the Bureau at least \$90 for each household it counts. American taxpayers cannot absorb cost increases of this magnitude without some relief.

Furthermore, I believe that the Bureau may have missed an important opportunity to bring the Census into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century by failing to offer an Internet response option. Instead, apart from the addition of handheld computers, the census is being conducted almost exclusively by pencil and paper. I know of no other field today that uses pencil and paper as its primary way of transacting with hundreds of millions of people.

As of now, the Census Bureau finds itself in a situation in which we are now one year closer to the Census, but yet the same problems remain. We talked about all of these issues at our hearing last year, yet I am disappointed to report that I see little, if any, progress.

That is why today I am announcing the Census Challenge.

I would like to challenge anyone in industry, academia, government or elsewhere to develop plans for how we can conduct a census for cheaper than \$90 a household. The American public is the most creative in the world and can surely develop ideas that will help spur new innovations in the way we conduct the Census.

Once we receive the various proposals, we will present them to the Secretary of Commerce and the Director of the Census for their consideration. If the proposals are good enough, we won't rule out legislation.

It is my hope that the Census Challenge will provide an opportunity to come along side the Census Bureau and assist them in their Constitutional responsibilities.

I would like to thank the witnesses for taking the time to be here today and look forward to their testimony.