

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 28, 2017

President Donald J. Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing as the leaders of the U.S Senate Committees with jurisdiction over the Department of Commerce and the Census Bureau to respectfully urge you to move quickly to nominate experienced and qualified individuals to serve in essential positions overseeing the operations of the Census Bureau. The current Director of the Census Bureau, John Thompson, will be stepping down in a matter of days, leaving a leadership vacuum at the Bureau just as the preparations for the 2020 Census move into the final three critical years. In addition to the vacancy at the top, the Bureau is lacking a presidentially-appointed Deputy Director of the Census Bureau. Also both positions at the Department of Commerce responsible for Census oversight – Deputy Secretary of Commerce and Under Secretary of Economic Affairs – are currently vacant.

The U.S. Census affects *all* Americans. Census data help to determine the annual allocation of billions of federal dollars, the apportionment of seats for the U.S. House of Representatives, and provide a social, demographic, and economic profile of the nation's people to guide policy decisions at each level of government. With less than three years to go until Census Day (April 1, 2020), the Bureau will soon start implementing new innovations, ramping up staff, employing marketing and advertising campaigns, and opening area offices nationwide. Capable leadership is needed to help the Bureau accomplish its goal to have operations plans finalized and ready to go by the Census Bureau's 2018 End-to-End Readiness Test.

The 2020 Census is currently facing serious challenges. In early February, it was added to the Government Accountability Office (GAO) 2017 High Risk List because of concerns with implementation of the Bureau's new census innovations and redesigns.<sup>1</sup> In addition, a recent House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Commerce Justice and Science hearing examined significant cost overruns with the Census Bureau's new IT system in addition to other budgetary concerns.<sup>2</sup> The Director's resignation, six months prior to the end of his term, adds to

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<sup>1</sup> Government Accountability Office, *High Risk Series: Progress on Many High Risk Areas, While Substantial Efforts Needed on Others* (GAO 17-317) (Feb. 2017).

<sup>2</sup> House Committee on Government Reform, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies, *Hearing on Oversight of the 2020 Census*, 115th Cong. (May 3, 2017).

President Donald J. Trump  
June 28, 2017  
Page 2

the mounting challenges facing the Census Bureau and could further jeopardize the 2020 Census program moving forward.

We understand that your Administration has faced historic delays in filling senior positions in the executive branch; however swift action is needed to ensure public confidence in the Census. As you continue to submit qualified nominees for your Administration, we respectfully ask that you make fully staffing the Census Bureau a priority. Thank you in advance for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



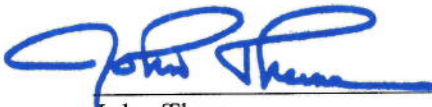
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Ron Johnson  
Chairman  
Committee on Homeland Security and  
Governmental Affairs



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Claire McCaskill  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Homeland Security and  
Governmental Affairs



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John Thune  
Chairman  
Committee on Commerce, Science, and  
Transportation



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Bill Nelson  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Commerce, Science, and  
Transportation