

Opening Statement of Robert L. Santos  
Nominee for Director, United States Census Bureau  
Before the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee

July 15, 2021

Chairman Peters, Ranking Member Portman, and Members of the Committee: It's an honor and I am humbled to appear before you today as the nominee for Director of the United States Census Bureau. I would like to thank the President and Secretary Raimondo for the trust they have placed in me with this nomination.

Born and raised in the barrios of my native San Antonio, Texas, I was fortunate to be among the Mexican American families whose parents were able to secure civil servant jobs at Kelly Air Force Base. I was also privileged to be educated at Little Flower Elementary School by the Irish nuns and taught to be a responsible adult by the Brothers at Holy Cross High School. The values instilled in me at these schools have been foundational to my leadership.

I am also a member of a Gold Star family. My brother Rene died in Vietnam in 1969 when I was a high school freshman. His death furnished the Section F deferment that I did not seek, and a pain that endures to this day. With the sacrifice he made for our country, I was free to attend San Antonio College, Trinity University, and then the University of Michigan to follow my dual passions of statistics and helping people. The opportunities that unfolded drive me to 'pay it forward' each day of my life. And if confirmed, it will be time to serve my country.

I would not be here today without the enduring support of my family. At age 18, I married my wife Adella after a three-month courtship. We've been married 48 years and she has been my most important source of support, counsel, and love. Our two children – Emilio and Clarisa – have always supported me and are constant sources of comfort and pride. And my two granddaughters – nine-year-old Rene and three-year-old Layla – brighten my heart incessantly. In fact, one of my biggest accomplishments has been caring for them with my wife in Austin the last half of 2020 during the COVID pandemic while my daughter finished nursing school in Arkansas and her husband Chris was deployed in Saudi Arabia.

I am eager to serve as Census Bureau Director because I care deeply about this country and believe I can give back to a Nation that has given me so much. I understand the importance of data quality and the role of the Census Bureau in providing critical information to nurture our Democracy, to inform our people, and to promote our great economy. The Census Bureau provides the data that weaves us all together to form a more perfect union.

Although this is political appointment, I am not a politician. I am a scientist, executive level manager, policy researcher, and long-time friend and supporter of the Census Bureau and the entire federal statistical system. Over a forty-year career, I have held leadership positions in academic, nonprofit, and commercial research organizations. I've worked on research projects for most federal agencies across many policy areas. I've held membership in scientific advisory committees for the Census Bureau, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Academies, and several others. I am the current President of the American Statistical Association, the largest association of statisticians in the world. And, I was recently President of

the American Association for Public Opinion Research. I've had the distinct honor of receiving the highest lifetime achievement awards from both organizations. I believe this body of work and experience positions me well to lead the Bureau, if I am confirmed as Director.

The Census Bureau needs a director who understands the critical role of providing quality data to allow our country to grow and prosper. Society is in the midst of a technological renaissance that increasingly relies on data to improve our quality of life. The Census Bureau should innovate and incorporate technological advances to create efficiencies and effectiveness. If confirmed, I can help by setting priorities and direction in these areas.

The Bureau also needs more transparency and independence to build public trust as it continues in earnest its planning of the 2030 decennial census, using lessons learned from its 2020 experience. Career staff at Census Bureau need to be recognized for the exceptional scientists that they are. The Director must have a role in nurturing and developing a staff that has endured a tumultuous 2020. And finally, the Director is in a key position to cultivate lines of communication with stakeholders and with Congress to solicit feedback for improvements and receive concerns.

In closing, I wish to thank the thousands in the scientific community, in my state and hometown, and my friends, family and colleagues for their support. If confirmed, I pledge to serve humbly, with honor and integrity.

Thank you, and I now look forward to your questions.