

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN, RANKING MEMBER

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

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

**“Countdown to Census Day: Progress Report on the Census Bureau’s
Preparedness for Enumeration”**

February 23, 2010

Senator Carper, thank you for holding this hearing today and for your continued oversight of the Census Bureau’s preparations for the 2010 census. I also want to welcome our panel of witnesses this afternoon.

This is the Committee’s second census oversight hearing since Dr. Groves’ confirmation and it may be the last one before the April 1st Census Day. We will hear about many of the same risks to the Decennial Census that have been previously identified. What I want to discuss today is cost – specifically the cost of the Census Bureau’s Super Bowl advertisements and the accuracy of cost-estimates for non-response follow up.

Dr. Groves, it is no secret the American people are hurting in this economy right now, and they are keenly attuned to how the government is spending their money. So, when the Census Bureau drops \$2.5 million to compete with ads for Doritos and Coca Cola during the Super Bowl, people become extremely concerned. I know that I am.

I understand that there will be more of these advertisements during the Olympics and March Madness. It is very important that we have a clear explanation today of how and why the decisions were made to buy these expensive ads.

Also, Dr. Groves, at our last hearing you testified that you were personally concerned about cost-estimation control. I share your strong concerns regarding unreliable cost-estimates. Last year, the Bureau went 25 percent over budget in assembling its address list. According to a recent Department of Commerce Inspector General Report, this included paying more than 15,000 people to do less than one day’s work or none at all. Clearly, this is unacceptable.

Following the address canvassing cost overruns, the Bureau said it was completely redoing the cost modeling for non-response follow up since it is expected to run in the billions of dollars. The revised projection now indicates non-response follow up could cost less than originally believed. While I am encouraged by this result, I would like you to discuss why the new estimates are more accurate, and the likelihood we will meet the reduced number.

Today, I am looking for candor on these cost issues, what other remaining problems exist, what we are doing to address them, and the contingencies in place if the system starts to break down. The mission of the 2010 Decennial Census – to count more than 300 million people in over 130 million households – is a herculean task. However, the American people still expect the Census Bureau to deliver the most accurate and trustworthy census in history, while not wasting money.