

**Opening Statement of Chairman Ron Johnson**  
***2020 Census: Examining Cost Overruns, Information Security, and Accuracy***  
**Tuesday, October 31, 2017**

*As prepared for delivery:*

Today's hearing will examine the serious challenges facing the 2020 Decennial Census. We will examine increasing costs, information technology (IT) security, and high-risk operations that could lead to an inaccurate Census count. In particular, I will be asking how and why did the Census morph into such a massive and seemingly out of control undertaking. I want to thank our witnesses for taking the time to discuss these important issues as we work together toward an accurate and cost-effective 2020 Census.

The Constitution mandates a decennial census in order to apportion congressional seats. The census is also used by policymakers to understand the demographic and geographic makeup of the U.S. population, and to allocate over \$700 billion in annual funds through nearly 300 different federal programs.

Although the census is constitutionally mandated, the cost to count our population is increasing faster than the population itself. The 1970 Census cost \$17 per household in inflation adjusted dollars. The Department of Commerce estimates that the 2020 Census will cost \$107 per household. At the direction of Congress, the Bureau created a plan to modernize the Census to avoid the costly mistakes of 2010. However, the ambitious plans – which include multiple self-response methods and new systems to store census data – bring additional risks that upgrades will not be delivered on time, or systems that are not fully secure could be manipulated or hacked.

In fact, the Department has already had to issue a new cost estimate—which is over \$3 billion more than the Census Bureau's original 2015 estimate. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross will testify today to explain the new estimate and the changes that his Department has already made to census operations and Bureau leadership, and the actions needed to keep census operations cost-efficient and accurate. We are pleased to have the Secretary with us today, and are grateful for his strong leadership on an issue with so many management challenges.

Secretary Ross is accompanied today by the Acting Census Bureau Director, Dr. Ron Jarmin. Dr. Jarmin, a 25-year veteran of the Census Bureau, can discuss the specific measures that the Bureau is taking to execute its new 2020 Census Operational Plan, which was released last Friday. As we head into the final years of 2020 Census preparations, we are grateful for Dr. Jarmin's interim leadership while we wait for the nomination of a permanent Census Director.

Finally, we welcome the Comptroller General, Gene Dodaro, who will explain how the 2020 Census could result in runaway costs or an inaccurate count of the U.S. population. In February, the Comptroller General testified that the Government Accountability Office added the 2020 Census to its "High Risk List." This is the third straight decennial census to be added to the list, and many of the GAO's current concerns are eerily similar to past warnings. Over half of the 68 GAO recommendations for improving the 2020 Census have not been implemented, the oldest of which goes back to 2007.

I thank all of our witnesses for being here today, and I look forward to your testimony.