

**Chairman Peters Opening Statement As Prepared for Delivery
Full Committee Hearing: Nominations of Robert L. Santos to be Director, U.S. Census Bureau,
U.S. Department of Commerce, and Ed Gonzalez to be Assistant Secretary for Immigration
and Customs Enforcement, U.S. Department of Homeland Security
July 15, 2021**

Today, we are considering two important nominations, Robert Santos to be Director of the Census Bureau, within the Department of Commerce, and Sheriff Ed Gonzalez to be Assistant Secretary for Immigration and Customs Enforcement commonly referred to as the Director for ICE within the Department of Homeland Security.

Welcome to both of you and to your family members joining us today. Congratulations on your nominations, and thank you for your willingness to take on these critical positions.

The Census Bureau is the leading source of quality data about our nation's people and economy. The Decennial Census, and the Bureau's surveys, are critical for helping communities, businesses, and people across our nation ensure they have the resources and information they need to thrive.

Mr. Santos, if confirmed, you will lead the Bureau as it completes the 2020 Census, plans for 2030, and administers the Bureau's crucial demographic and economic surveys in a changing nation.

I know that you understand the importance of the Census Bureau's mission and the challenges it faces. As an expert in statistical research and survey design who has worked extensively with the Bureau, you know that stakeholders rely on the Census Bureau to produce data that is reliable and accurate.

You also know that transparency and accountability are essential for building and maintaining trust in the Bureau and its data.

I am looking forward to hearing more about your background and your vision for the Census Bureau.

Sheriff Gonzalez, if confirmed, you will lead an agency with a vast public safety mandate. In addition to immigration enforcement responsibilities, ICE contains DHS's principal investigative entity, Homeland Security Investigations, or "HSI", which is charged with investigating transnational criminal activity that threatens the safety of communities throughout the United States. ICE's law enforcement professionals combat narcotics smuggling, terrorist networks, human trafficking, financial crimes, and other threats to public safety.

As you know from your extensive law enforcement background, this is vital and extraordinarily difficult work. ICE and its workforce face no shortage of internal and external challenges.

ICE has been without a Senate-confirmed Director for four-and-a-half years, and this absence of stable leadership has made it even more difficult for ICE to effectively carry out its mission. ICE urgently needs a qualified, committed leader who will tackle the agency's challenges head-on.

If confirmed, you will be responsible for rebuilding trust, with ICE's workforce, Congress, state and local partners, and other stakeholders. This means supporting and improving on what is working, but also recognizing and correcting what is not working.

From our earlier conversation, I know that you understand and are prepared for the difficult work ahead, and I greatly appreciated your commitment to accountability and transparency.

I look forward to hearing more about your qualifications and plans to lead this critical agency.