

**Opening Statement of Senator Thomas R. Carper
May 15, 2009**

Dr. Groves, your nomination, as you know, comes at a critical time for the Census Bureau. While the agency is not among the largest in the Federal government, it nonetheless plays an integral role.

Most people know that the Bureau is the government agency that counts the population every 10 years. Less known is that it regularly provides the government, business and academia with an updated picture of who we are as individuals, communities and a nation.

As one of the federal government's few constitutionally mandated functions, the decennial census determines how many seats each state gets in the House of Representatives and how hundreds of billions of dollars in federal assistance are allocated to state and local governments.

Finding and enumerating nearly 300 million individuals is, of course, an extremely daunting task. Since I took over as chairman of the subcommittee with oversight over the Census Bureau, I have been struck by the complexity of the undertaking and by the amount of staff and resources needed to get the job done, and done well.

The census requires years of planning and preparation, followed by lightning execution in real time. In fact the 2000 Census involved hiring nearly a half million temporary workers, opening over 500 local census offices nationwide, and following up with 42 million nonrespondent households.

Given the sheer magnitude of such an undertaking, a shortcoming in one area can quickly have a domino effect on other operations. For example, a low mail response rate would increase the nonresponse follow-up workload, which in turn would increase the Bureau's staffing needs and drive up costs.

With each census, the challenge continues to grow in terms of cost and complexity as our population becomes larger, more diverse and increasingly difficult to enumerate. The cost of the 2010 Census has escalated to an estimated \$14 billion, making it the most expensive census history by far. Put another way, it will cost the nation an estimated \$100 to count each household in 2010, compared to \$56 in 2000 and \$13 in 1970.

The growing cost of the census at a time when the federal government is facing an unprecedented budget deficit highlights the importance of making sure that every dollar spent on the census improves the quality of the data collected.

The 2010 Census is approaching rapidly with Census Day now less than a year away. The Bureau has faced many operational and management challenges that have jeopardized its success. These challenges include under-funding by the last administration for outreach to

minority communities, and the colossal mismanagement and failure of the contract for handheld computers that led to an entire re-plan of the census very late in the game.

The Census Bureau has taken steps to get the census back on track, but it is imperative that a strong management team is in place so that it can remain on the right track. I feel the need to reiterate that although Census Day may officially last one day; its impact is felt over a decade. An inaccurate census count can be a major setback for millions of communities already struggling for economic survival.

With that said, I do not have any doubt that Dr. Groves is up to the challenge and that he commands the respect necessary both inside and outside the government to restore confidence in the agency's competence and integrity.

Dr. Groves, you have a strong background in statistics and issues related to the census, and you will bring a wealth of experience and service as Director of the Census. I appreciate your commitment to public service and your willingness to help the Bureau navigate through such challenging times.