

OPENING STATEMENT OF STEVEN DILLINGHAM

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member and Committee Members, I would like to share with you an experience some years ago, when my wife Kimberly and daughter Abigail joined me for my confirmation hearing to be Director of the Bureau of Justice Statistics. That hearing was before the Senate Judiciary Committee chaired by the Honorable Joe Biden. As he lifted his gavel to close the hearing, my infant daughter began to cry. Senator Biden smiled and remarked, “Let the record show that Abigail has the last word.” While quite memorable, we will not have a repeat performance today.

Let me begin by acknowledging the importance of public service to my family and me. My wife has been a part-time social worker and public school teacher. Her mother also was a school teacher. My daughter is a public school teacher. She saves her money to support her summer travels as a volunteer teacher in villages of developing countries, including in Southeast Asia, Central America and Africa. My father entered military service at age 17 during World War II and retired from the enlisted ranks more than two decades later. He named his three sons for military leaders for whom he served during two wars. My father-in-law retired as a Lt. General following his distinguished career of more than three decades as a leading defense strategist and analyst. The Air Force annually bestows a prestigious leadership award in his honor. In our household, public service is a noble family tradition.

It is an honor to appear before you and to be considered for this position of public trust. I am grateful to President Trump, Secretary Ross and Under Secretary Kelley, and all who support my nomination. I particularly thank Members of this Committee for your consideration. If confirmed, I pledge to serve with the professionalism and integrity that you expect and the nation deserves.

My commitment to public service background includes directing two Federal statistical agencies and several research offices. I also have been a manager in large and small businesses, non-profits, and universities. My management and research experience ranges from enforcing whistleblower protections to analyzing program results. Historically, the talents and experiences of Bureau Directors have served them well. If confirmed, I think mine will as well.

I understand that challenges facing the Bureau and its incoming Director are numerous and difficult, and the 2020 Decennial Census presents an immediate need. If confirmed, I will be dedicated to ensuring that the workforce is ready, willing and able to accomplish the Bureau’s mission as the leading provider of quality information on the nation’s people and economy. I am mindful of the need to work with this Committee, the Government Accountability Office, the Office of Inspector General, and others to be successful. I will support a workforce committed to mission, principles and accountability.

If confirmed, my focus areas will include:

- 1) *Achieving results.* I am committed to providing Bureau leadership in fulfilling the Bureau’s mission and performing its constitutional and statutory responsibilities for conducting censuses and surveys, while mitigating risks;

- 2) *Encouraging and maintaining organizational and professional integrity.* I pledge to support a Federal statistical agency culture of principles and practices grounded in relevance to policy issues, credibility among data users, trust among data providers, and independence from improper influences;
- 3) *Fostering workforce excellence.* I will lead efforts to support an engaged and diverse workforce that provides quality products and services, bolsters employee morale, and is recognized for professionalism and performance.

Let me provide a personal perspective on the importance of data collection. A decade ago, I volunteered for civilian service in Iraq as part of a US led initiative to restore peace, rebuild the Nation's government and economy, and establish the rule of law. One of my duties was to assist with strategic planning and establishing a system of data collection, including for Iraq's justice system, under challenging and often unsafe conditions. The effort involved the compilation of data in provinces and its physical delivery to the Justice Ministry in Baghdad, which was a target of car bombings and other attacks. Iraqi officials would risk life and limb traveling in unsafe and hazardous conditions across deserts stretching hundreds of miles to deliver this data. At the Justice Ministry, an office staffed with dedicated Iraqi women professionally compiled and reported the data. On my final visit to that office, the Iraqi female officials proudly presented their miraculously published statistical results. Then, in contravention of custom, they all shook our hands.

Accurate data is an essential underpinning for representative and responsive government, as well as a thriving economy. While the Census Bureau faces challenges, I know that it has the talent and commitment for meeting them. I hope that you find me worthy to contribute. I look forward to your questions.