



T O M C A R P E R

UNITED STATES SENATOR · DELAWARE



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

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

**HEARING: "From Strategy to Implementation: Strengthening U.S.-Pakistan
Relations"**

Opening Statement of Senator Thomas R. Carper, Chairman

Today's hearing is a continuation of our oversight of the Census Bureau's preparation for the 2010 Census. The 2010 Census is approaching rapidly with Census Day less than six months away. On April 1, 2010, the Census Bureau will embark upon what many have described as the largest peacetime mobilization in American history. With nearly a \$15 billion budget and an army of 1.3 million census-takers, the Census Bureau is responsible for ensuring that nearly 300 million residents are correctly counted.

As my colleagues can probably guess, finding and accurately counting nearly 300 million individuals in the correct location is, of course, an extremely daunting task. Census-taking has become even more challenging in recent years as the nation's population has grown steadily larger, more diverse, and increasingly difficult to find. For a number of reasons, people may also be more reluctant to participate in the census.

Last year, the Census Bureau encountered serious technological challenges that threatened to jeopardize the success of the 2010 Census. Since then, the Bureau has put forth great effort in putting the Census back on track. I am told that the Bureau recently completed its address canvassing well ahead of schedule thanks to a high quality staff. The handheld computers that have received so much negative attention in recent months performed as expected, and the Bureau has already begun to open local census offices throughout the country.

Despite these successes, much work needs to be done by the Bureau to put its operational plans in place and to execute them effectively. Connecting with young mobile and wired populations, establishing trust with skeptical populations, and integrating the major components of a complex operation are just a few of the challenges that lie ahead.

Investigations conducted by both GAO and the Inspector General have revealed serious challenges with the contracting and implementation of key information technology systems at the Census Bureau. These reports have also noted the unreliability of the Census Bureau's

cost estimate for the total 2010 project. And the absence of adequate testing of the processes that will be used to follow up with non-responders is a serious concern as well.

Given the sheer magnitude of an undertaking such as the decennial census, a shortcoming in any 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.

I look forward to the expert testimony our distinguished panel of witnesses will provide today. It is my hope that today's proceedings will provide us with a clear assessment of the complications facing the Census Bureau, and how Congress can best partner with the Bureau as it works towards achieving its goal of an accurate and cost-effective Census in 2010.

In closing, I would like to express my condolences to the family of Mr. William Sparkman, the Census taker who was found in Kentucky a few weeks ago. Our thoughts and prayers are with you today. I would like to thank all of the hardworking Census employees who assist us in fulfilling our constitutional obligation of conducting a decennial census. We truly value your service.

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