

## **Statement of Senator Thomas R. Carper**

**December 18, 2007**

### **Nomination of Steven H. Murdock**

The committee will come to order.

I am pleased to be able to serve as chairman today as the committee considers the nomination of Steven H. Murdock to be Director of the U.S. Census Bureau.

Dr. Murdock, your nomination comes at a crucial time for the Census Bureau. While the agency is not among the largest in the federal government, the tasks it is responsible for – particularly the decennial census – are among the most important things that we do. In fact, the decennial census is one of the few things that the Constitution requires that we do.

And the decennial census is a massive undertaking, as well. Since I took over as chairman of the subcommittee with oversight over the Census Bureau, I've been struck by the complexity of the undertaking and the amount of staff and resources needed to get it done. There is probably nothing out there that compares to it with the exception of mail delivery or a military campaign.

Many of my colleagues – and probably most Americans – may not be aware that the Census Bureau will be working over the coming months to make the final preparations for the 2010 census. Procedures and technologies will be tested. Field offices will be opened. Additional staff will be hired. The final plans for how the count will be carried out will be drawn up.

It is vitally important, then, that we get a strong management team in place as soon as possible.

The last decennial census cost more than \$6 billion. This one is projected to cost about \$11.5 billion. Senator Coburn and I have heard testimony from GAO and others that this number may be outdated and that the final bill for the 2010 census is likely to be much higher. It could be billions of dollars higher if some of the technology being tested now – particularly the hand-held computers that census-takers will be using – do not work as planned or do not work at all.

In addition, the Bureau will be under pressure in 2010 to improve the accuracy of the census. During past decennials, there has been a sense that a number of groups have been undercounted. In order to get the best, most accurate count, the Bureau will need to step up efforts to reach out to those groups that have historically been difficult to reach. The effectiveness of a number of government programs and the fairness of the redistricting process in the House of Representatives depend on the effectiveness of these efforts.

So, if you are confirmed, Dr. Murdock, you will certainly have your work cut out for you. Management issues and other challenges faced by the Census Bureau have raised doubts about our ability to conduct an affordable and accurate 2010 census. I look forward to hearing how you would use your background and management skills to erase these doubts and get the tough work ahead of us done and done well.