

Opening Statement of Chairman Ron Johnson

“2020 Census: Challenges Facing the Bureau for a Modern, Cost-Effective Survey”

Monday, April 20, 2015

As prepared for delivery:

I would first like to express my condolences to the family and loved ones of Lawrence Buckner. Mr. Buckner was killed in the line of duty on April 9, 2015 at the federal facility where the Census Bureau is headquartered. It's a tragedy that Mr. Buckner lost his life from such a callous act of violence while he was protecting federal employees at their place of work.

Today's hearing is a chance to examine the Bureau's work towards the 2020 Census. We are at the halfway point in planning for our nation's headcount, and it is important that the Census Bureau is adequately prepared.

Unfortunately, the cost of the 2010 Census looms over the Bureau's work for 2020. The 2010 Census was the most expensive in our nation's history, with a price tag of approximately \$13 billion. And \$3 billion of the cost of the 2010 Census stemmed from developing an IT project, then abandoning it, and then reverting to an alternative.

If the 2020 Census were to continue the historical trend of increasing costs for each decennial survey, it will cost taxpayers nearly \$25 billion. It cost about \$97 per-household unit to conduct the 2010 Census, and the Bureau is aiming to maintain this per-household unit cost.

The Bureau has also identified areas where it can achieve costs savings of up to \$5 billion by modernizing the design structure of the 2020 Census. However, these efforts to modernize carry greater risks, which can lead to greater costs. Therefore, it is important that the Bureau identifies and mitigates these risks as soon as possible rather than kick the can down the road, hoping that everything runs smoothly come Census Day 2020.

The Bureau is undertaking several information technology initiatives in preparation for the 2020 Census. The 2020 Census will be the first with a heavy focus on Internet response. More field operations will be automated and streamlined in order to need less boots on the ground. The Bureau is also developing an information technology system-the Census Enterprise Collection and Processing initiative - which will be the backbone supporting these initiatives.

This modernization for the 2020 Census is the kind of challenge that many would shy away from, so I thank the Bureau and its Director, Mr. John Thompson, for facing this challenge head-on. I also want to thank the Government Accountability Office, from which we have two witnesses today, for their hard work to help inform both the Bureau and Congress about these initiatives for a cost-effective and innovative 2020 Census.

Thank you to the witnesses for speaking with us today, and I look forward to your testimony.