

Opening Statement of Senator James Lankford  
"2020 Census: Challenges Facing the Bureau for a Modern, Cost-Effective Survey"  
April 20, 2015

*As prepared for delivery:*

Good afternoon, the Committee will come to order.

I would like to welcome everyone to this afternoon's hearing on the 2020 Census: Challenges for Facing a Modern, Cost-Effective Survey. I will begin by recognizing myself for an opening statement.

Director Thompson, on behalf of the Committee, I would like to express our condolences regarding the loss of Lawrence Buckner, who was killed in the line of duty on April 9th at the Census Bureau headquarters in Suitland, MD.

This was a senseless act of violence, and our thoughts and prayers are with his family and with those at the Bureau.

The United States Constitution mandates that an "actual enumeration shall be made within three years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent term of ten years."

As 2020 decennial census approaches, I appreciate the fact that the Census Bureau is actively taking steps to prepare, since as we have seen in the past, a failure to do so can drastically increase costs for the federal government, and ultimately the taxpayers.

It is laudable that the Bureau is working toward implementation of an innovation strategy, with a goal of saving the taxpayers money.

However, as GAO has noted, although progress has been made since 2010, more work is needed to ensure that technology systems are fully operational and information remains secure and confidential.

While it is important that we have information regarding the makeup of this nation, it is also important that we safeguard the privacy of the American people. Questions asked of citizens of this nation must be cost-effective and should not be overly intrusive.

When the questions go too far, it exceeds what we should be asking as the United States government. It is invasive and fuels an environment of distrust.

It is important that we examine not just the preparation for the 2020 Census itself, but also the manner in which the Census and other surveys, like the American Community Survey are being conducted, as well as the substantive nature of the questions being asked.

I look forward to your testimony and I now recognize the Ranking Member, Senator Carper, for his opening statement.