

Statement of  
Senator Susan M. Collins

**Robert M. Groves to be  
Director of the Census, U.S. Department of  
Commerce**

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs  
May 15, 2009

★ ★ ★

**With the 2010 Census fast approaching, the next Director of the U.S. Census Bureau will need to quickly take action to ensure an effective “actual enumeration” of all those residing in the United States.**

**The decennial census is a complex and extensive operation, and the information collected has a major impact on the distribution of political power and over \$300 billion in federal resources. With so much at stake, it is essential that the results of the census be accurate,**

objective, credible, and free from even the appearance of political influence.

The Census Bureau faces major operational and organizational challenges. Bureau officials acknowledged in 2008 that it was experiencing mission critical problems with its management and testing of key information technology systems. These problems resulted in a dramatic increase in the life-cycle cost of the 2010 Census and also raised questions about the Bureau's ability to effectively complete this responsibility.

I find it particularly alarming that after all the technological gains our society has made and the millions of dollars invested by the Census Bureau on handheld computers for nonresponse follow-up operations that the Bureau has returned once again to the use of paper and

pencil to gather this important data. It is clear that there are woefully inadequate procurement practices, and, at worst, gross mismanagement at the Bureau. We simply cannot afford to waste time and money on critical programs that do not produce results, particularly on constitutionally mandated tasks like the census.

The next Director of the Census Bureau must take steps now to address both current and future census challenges.

If the President's fiscal year 2010 budget request is fully-funded, the Census Bureau and Department of Commerce will be charged with managing \$11 billion in taxpayer funds over the next 18 months. This is an enormous amount of funds for an agency with such a poor track record of fiscal mismanagement – a record that prompted my letter in March urging the Commerce

Department to develop and implement a strategic plan to ensure the appropriate use of these tax dollars. To put these challenges in perspective, the 2010 Census is considered to be the largest non-military mobilization of resources and personnel in U.S. history and is estimated to cost over \$14 billion at completion.

The next Director must also look beyond 2010, preparing the Bureau for the next decade and the 2020 Census. Planning must begin now for any major IT investments for the 2020 decennial. The Bureau must carefully consider how to use the Internet to promote effective initial responses. It should also examine incentives and other mechanisms for promoting survey response and limiting the percentage of survey recipients that fail to meet their lawful obligation to respond.

**Dr. Robert Groves is the President's nominee to oversee this enormous project and lead the Census Bureau during this critical time. Given the Supreme Court's prohibition on the use of sampling for apportionment, it is my hope that Dr. Groves will alleviate my concerns today by outlining his vision for the Bureau. If confirmed, he will be responsible for ensuring that the Bureau fulfills its mission in accordance with the U.S. Constitution, without undue political influence, and with careful management of the taxpayer dollars entrusted to it.**

*###*