

TESTIMONY

Nomination Hearing of Louis Kincannon To be Director of the U.S. Census Bureau Governmental Affairs Committee Chairman Joe Lieberman

February 28, 2002

Good morning and welcome Mr. Kincannon. We're happy to have you before the Committee today because the post to which you have been nominated exerts enormous influence over the lives of all Americans. Quite literally, you are one of the people who will decide who is counted and who is not, who will benefit from federal resources and who will not. So it is essential that the Census chief be fair-minded, a professional administrator who will guarantee not only the most accurate and scientifically-sound count but who will also guarantee that all elements of our country, especially those who are historically undercounted, are included in our census tabulations.

Mr. Kincannon, your years of public service speak well for you. Beginning your career 30 years ago as a Census Bureau statistician, Mr. Kincannon steadily rose through the ranks. In 1975, you left the Bureau for the Office of Management and Budget where you worked with Jim Miller at the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs and received a commendation from then Vice-President Bush for your work on regulatory reform.

In 1981, Mr. Kincannon returned to the Census Bureau as deputy director and served in that post through the first President Bush administration. Twice during that period he served as acting director. And in 1992, he was appointed the first Chief Statistician in the Organisation (cq) for Economic Cooperation and Development.

For the record, Mr. Kincannon was born in Waco, Texas, and is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin. He did graduate work at Georgetown University, George Washington University, and the University of Maryland. Except for eight years in Paris, he and his wife have resided in Virginia. They have two daughters and are expecting another grandchild in April. Congratulations to you.

Obviously, you have demonstrated your loyalty to and affection for the Census Bureau and have twice proven your expertise as the Bureau's acting director.

Most people know the Bureau is the government agency that counts the population every 10 years. Less known is that it regularly provides government, business, and academia with an updated picture of who we are as individuals, as communities, and as Americans. With so many aspects of our society dependent on the Bureau's work, the director must encourage cooperation and openness among his ranks. The agency has long been criticized for its insular nature. So, I hope you will work to make the Bureau a more customer-friendly place.

You won't be surprised that I must add a word about the controversy that has surrounded the fairness of the decennial count - a controversy that has been raging for two decades. We are a nation of entrepreneurs, scientists and thinkers - the most technologically advanced country on the globe. Our population counts, I believe, should reflect that mastery. In other words, we should be using the most advanced methods at our disposal to capture the most accurate portrait of our people.

We know that the actual enumeration - the effort to count every head - doesn't

provide an accurate count of the country's diverse population - particularly the poor, African Americans, Hispanic Americans and Native Americans. We also know that statisticians have long used a variety of methods to help them provide more accurate data.

The Census Bureau has used these methods to try to make the decennial census more accurate but, for a variety of reasons, it has not incorporated the results into its final census numbers. Consequently, we can't be sure that our House seats are correctly apportioned, our congressional districts are properly drawn, or our government resources directed to all the people they should be directed to. In turn, the decisions of private investors, the blueprints of community planners, the efforts of the local school board, and many others are different from what they otherwise might be.

I will say to you directly that I am concerned about the Bureau's methodology. But this is not just a statisticians' battle. This is about the equitable treatment of all Americans, especially those whose voices are too often not heard. The Census Bureau serves a very broad constituency that blankets all of America. Its must be responsive to that fact. Thank you. Senator Thompson?

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