



**PREPARED STATEMENT OF
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*2010 Census: Participation of Hard to Count Communities
in Non-Response Follow-up*

**Before the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
Subcommittee on Information Policy, Census, and National Archives
U.S. House of Representatives**

30 April, 2010

Chairman Clay, Ranking Member McHenry, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify today. As you know, tomorrow we move into the nonresponse follow-up (NRFU) phase of the 2010 Census, with over 600,000 census takers preparing to walk every street in America to interview the households that did not mail back their census questionnaires.

At this critical juncture of the census I am pleased to report that the cooperation of the American people thus far has exceeded expectations. As of last Tuesday, when we completed the definition of our NRFU workload for each Local Census Office (LCO), the mailback participation rate was 72 percent, equaling our nation's effort in 2000. For this accomplishment we should thank the American public.

When I entered my position in July, 2009, one of the highest external risks facing the 2010 census was the uncertain cooperation of the American public to the mailout-mailback request. We can now say with some assurance that the American public has removed that risk from our concerns.

The 2000 Census was widely regarded as the most successful ever, and it is a significant achievement in 2010 for the country to match the participation rate of that effort. It is particularly remarkable given that we believe the residents of this country are more difficult to count in 2010. We are bigger by 30 million people. We are more diverse, and more of us are not native English speakers. More of us are facing economic dislocation from our homes or live in non-standard housing arrangements, and we have less trust in major institutions.

Our country's success in rising to this challenge is due in no small part to the stalwart support of this Committee, your fellow members of Congress, and the work of more than 226,000 2010 census partners. The creativity of these groups has been phenomenal. They have hung door hangers describing the census on millions of houses. They have held census fairs, sponsored poster contests for schoolchildren to advertise the census, and knocked on doors to tell people to look for the census form in the mail or the census taker if they don't mail it back. One partner even spent days at a juvenile court, talking with parents and teenagers as they waited in line for the judicial hearing, urging them to participate in the census!

These are some of the true heroes of the 2010 census. They are not being paid. They are not visibly honored by their locales. They are not becoming famous. They are working their neighborhoods because they believe that a fair count of their areas will provide fair political representation and federal funding. They are a big part of the reason we can talk today about our success so far. Without them, we would not have been as successful.

But partnerships are not enough. Our experience in 2000, and again in 2010, underscores the importance of a strong paid advertising campaign. Our campaign provided the messaging that partners could build on, raised awareness among the general public, and allowed us to effectively target hard-to-count populations in their language and culture. In fact, we knew going into this Census that we would need a robust campaign to even approach the 2000 participation rate.

Nonetheless, as we examine the participation rates it is clear that there are still reasons to be concerned. Earlier in this initial phase of the census it was clear participation rates were lower than expected nation-wide, and the rates for Blacks, Hispanics and Asians were lower than the national average. We knew this because we were studying real time data from the 65,000 census tracts. We analyzed the data to determine what types of tracts were showing higher and

lower participation rates. Based on these empirical analyses we made the decision on April 1 to increase our paid advertising budget by an additional \$22 million and allocated it by population group to those areas with the lowest response rates.

We also conducted an event, the “March to the Mailbox,” on April 10 in approximately 6,000 low responding tracts, urging local residents to fill out their form and mail it back. More than 20,000 partner organizations engaged more than 250,000 volunteers on this single day to urge census participation in many of our nation's hardest to count tracts. Both of these efforts coincided with the arrival of our replacement questionnaires, which also were targeted to hard-to-count, low responding census tracts, and we witnessed a noticeable bump up in mailback response from all areas.

Our challenge now is to carry this success forward as we move into the next phase of the 2010 Census, which focuses on completing interviews with the roughly 48 million households that did not mail back their form or who did not receive a form at their home. On May 1st, we begin this door-to-door operation when over 600,000 temporary census workers begin walking through every neighborhood in America to complete this task. Our challenge over the last three months has been to develop the pool of recruits needed to fill these positions. We hire locally, so that our census-takers capture the local diversity of the community and are familiar with the neighborhoods they are enumerating, and we prioritize the language skills to communicate effectively in the areas where the work is being done. I can report today that this workforce is in place. In all but three Local Census Offices we have at least 2 qualified recruits for each position we need to fill, and in most of our Local Census Offices (LCO) that ratio is closer to 4 to 1. Recruiting continues in the few areas where more applicants are needed, and we are confident that we will meet our goals.

It is difficult to overestimate the magnitude of this effort. The 494 LCOs are all in place and have sufficient staff, supplies and equipment necessary to get the job done. Staff in those offices organized and conducted 33,000 training sessions this week. An additional 5,000 replacement training sessions may be conducted in the following weeks. The 48 million households that need to be enumerated have been divided into 1.5 million assignment areas distributed evenly across our workforce. And census takers will drive over 950 million miles to complete this operation. Despite the enormity of this task, we are well positioned to tackle it. As of last Friday, given the number of households that returned their questionnaires, 310 of our Local Census Offices have fewer households to visit

than we originally expected. An additional 155 are within 10% of the expected workload, and the other 29 are not much higher.

In developing this effort specific attention has been paid to enumerating the hard-to-count areas that are less likely to return their questionnaires. Our Regional Directors and LCO managers developed tract-level action plans articulating the specific challenges in each assignment area. These plans inform the specific strategies that include sending census takers out in teams of two in dangerous areas, and ensuring that the workforce has the language skills required for the neighborhoods they are enumerating.

Here in Los Angeles, the regional staff has hired more enumerators in identified hard-to-count tracts because those tracts will take more time and effort to enumerate. LCOs also created a "Tract at a Glance" chart which summarizes the tract profile on one page with graphic presentations to assist managers in deploying the appropriate workforce. For areas in which there are high concentrations of apartment complexes, Crew Leaders have searched the internet to get phone numbers for apartment management companies and rental offices to develop a list of phone contacts to facilitate entry into locked or gated facilities. Crew Leaders plan to call ahead to contact the property management company to get advance assistance in gaining access. And in high risk areas, or high crime areas they have identified areas that will be best enumerated in group enumeration or during daylight hours for the safety of the enumerators. These are just a few of the ways that the Los Angeles (LA) regional staff is tailoring operations to meet the unique challenges they face. Every region is making similar adaptations.

We're going to do everything we can to make sure we reach everyone. In some cases this will mean that we visit households that already returned their questionnaire. This happens when someone submitted their questionnaire too late to be pulled from our list of non-responding households, or because we have not yet matched the addresses provided on a "Be Counted" form or over the phone to an address in our master address list. We accept the fact that we have to visit some households that returned their forms because we have to make sure that we get everyone. We ask people to be patient with us when this happens.

The cooperation of the American public is the biggest risk in the nonresponse follow-up operation. Interviewers are instructed to work evenings and weekends, when most residents tend to be at home. Until we complete a questionnaire, we will repeatedly visit a household -- up to six times over several

days. After the 6th call we will gather any information we can to determine the number of residents in the housing unit. This process will not end until we have a disposition for all 48 million households. That is, we do not quit until we have a 100% response rate.

The mailout/mailback and nonresponse follow-up operations I have discussed are part of a series of interlocking operations required to conduct a successful census. This began with the development of the address list that defines the universe of households we need to enumerate, and the address canvassing operation wherein census staff walked nearly every street of America to make sure our list was accurate and complete. Since the completion of those operations we have completed six others. These include efforts to count people without conventional living arrangements by visiting soup kitchens, shelters, and outdoor locations where people congregate or sleep, as well as the operations necessary to count people living in migrant worker housing, boats, tent cities, homeless shelters, nursing homes, dormitories, prisons, and other diverse dwellings. All operations subsequent to address canvassing are on time and on budget.

Let me turn to an internal risk. When I arrived in July, 2009, one of the highest internal risks facing the 2010 Census was the very late and fragile development of software needed to administer the nonresponse follow-up workload. Given the late change from a handheld device to a paper-based nonresponse follow-up, this software was clearly facing compressed development and restricted testing time. In every testimony I have given to this committee, I have reiterated my concerns about this software system – called the Paper Based Operations Control System (PBOCS). This is a Web-based, address-driven database which the Census Bureau uses to manage the work of hundreds of thousands of census workers to ensure a complete and accurate 2010 Census.

We are not out of the woods, but I am happy to report that last week the system survived its heaviest work load to date, when the assignment area packets for each of the over 600,000 census takers were successfully produced with up-to-date listings of those addresses that require follow-up. This is a testament to the commitment of the staff and our consultants who literally worked night and day to stabilize the system over its initial days.

However, this is just one requirement for PBOCS, and while it is now functioning relatively smoothly we are carefully monitoring its continued development and implementation. PBOCS is central to our ability to ensure that we are getting

responses from every household, and its management functions are supporting our operations. For example, PBOCS was effectively used to manage the work of census workers as they counted people living in Remote Alaska, and conducted the group quarters operations mentioned above. These operations began on time and were managed successfully with PBOCS, despite any issues, which gives us confidence about the next several months.

Nonetheless, we remain vigilant in monitoring this operation because of its importance to ensuring an accurate and complete enumeration of the entire population, including those in hard-to-count areas.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, we have successfully completed the first half of the 2010 Census, but there are still challenges ahead. That is notable, but we can't rest. We will go to great lengths to reach every household, and to make sure that everyone is included in final counts. In this I need your help in telling everyone living in America to "open your doors to the Census, so the Census can open doors for you." I thank the Committee for its ongoing support in this effort, and I am happy to take your questions.