

PREPARED STATEMENT OF

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**PERFORMING THE NON-EXCLUSIVE FUNCTIONS AND
DUTIES OF THE DIRECTOR
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“Making Indian Country Count: Native Americans and the 2020 Census”

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Good morning Chairman Hoeven, Vice Chairman Udall, and Members of the Committee. I welcome the opportunity to talk with you today about the Census Bureau’s work to ensure a high quality enumeration of the American Indian and Alaska Native communities in the 2020 Census. I am excited to have the opportunity to discuss our ongoing government-to-government relationships with American Indian and Alaska Native tribes. We have worked together to plan a 2020 Census that will count everyone on tribal lands once, only once, and in the right place.

While the Census Bureau is planning the most automated, and modern, decennial census in history, we have not disregarded, and in fact recognize more than ever, the unique challenges associated with conducting the decennial census in American Indian and Alaska Native areas. We share the concerns that tribal delegates have raised about the undercount of American Indians and Alaska Natives in previous counts, and are committed to improving this in the 2020 Census.

The 2018 End-to-End Census Test, which is our last opportunity to validate our design and readiness for the 2020 Census, is now underway and field operations will continue through the summer. Following the test, we will finalize plans for all operations and make any necessary

adjustments to ensure readiness for the 2020 Census enumeration, which will kick off in remote Alaskan villages on January 20, 2020.

Tribal Engagement

To help us prepare for the 2020 Census, we have continued to build and implement our tribal partnership and we have received vital insights and advice from our tribal partners. We held a series of invaluable consultations with tribal leaders from across the nation, we meet monthly with tribal representatives, and we have continued our ongoing engagements with the Census Bureau's National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic and Other Populations (NAC). The NAC has included several distinguished representatives of the Nation's tribal communities, including my fellow witnesses and trusted Census Bureau partners.

For the 2020 Census, we began consultations with tribal representatives in 2015, two years earlier in the census lifecycle than in prior censuses. The Census Bureau held 17 tribal consultations and one national webinar with federally- and state-recognized tribes and Alaska regional and village corporations. We met with over 400 tribal delegates representing over 250 different tribes, corporations, and organizations.

What We Have Heard...

On Enumeration - The Census Bureau informed the tribes that the 2020 Census would have four response options: Internet, telephone, paper, and enumerator. Some tribes reported that Internet response is currently not a viable option for many tribal citizens and requested an in-person enumerator. The Census Bureau is aware Internet access is an issue in rural areas and therefore plans to include a paper questionnaire in the first 2020 Census mailing to households in these areas. As well, the Census Bureau will provide all households – regardless how remote or urban – the option of respond via telephone.

On Partnerships – Tribal delegates shared with us their interest in effective communication between their tribal representatives and the staff working on the 2020 Census in the field. Their focus was on ensuring the Census Bureau provides clear guidance and training to the Census

Bureau field offices such as recognizing the unique preferences and challenges among the diverse tribal communities to ensure the most effective engagement with each tribe.

On Population Statistics – The Census Bureau discussed with tribes how the American Indian and Alaska Native responses from the race question were coded, classified, and tabulated under each federally recognized, state-recognized or non-recognized tribe names. A tribal classification code list was presented to the tribes for review and input for any name changes or additions. While this list was presented to tribal leadership during the consultations, the Census Bureau will continue the government-to-government relationship by formally soliciting feedback on the coding and classification of their tribal responses. The formal letter, along with the coding list, will be sent to tribal leadership in spring of 2018.

On Tribal Enrollment – A large majority of the tribes were not in favor of a tribal enrollment question. Tribes expressed that the self-response option will not allow us to collect accurate data, given the differences and complexity of tribal enrollment across American Indian and Alaska Native populations. Tribal enrollment is private information, and the inquiry would infringe upon tribal sovereignty. Tribes also expressed that the Federal Government does not need to collect tribal enrollment data.

This valuable input is a good example of how our tribal engagements are successful. Based on these types of consultations, the Census Bureau made the decision not to include a tribal enrollment question on the 2020 Census or on the American Community Survey.

Actions Underway for the 2020 Census

I would like to now share the concrete plans we have underway, and how each has been tailored to maximize our ability to count the American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

Continuing with our Partnerships

The Census Bureau has had an American Indian and Alaska Native Partnership Program since 2000, and we continue to meet with our regional tribal partnership staff each month to share the most current information about Census Bureau processes as well as to elicit information on best

practices from tribal partners. This program has been instrumental in spearheading programs such as the Tribal Complete Count Committees, which have documented successful census outreach efforts on tribal lands. To date, more than 50 tribes and representative tribal associations have appointed a 2020 Census Tribal Liaison to work with our regional tribal partnership staff to prepare for the census. These tribal liaisons will help the Census Bureau in many ways – from developing effective census materials, to finding efficient ways to recruit and hire tribal citizens to manage and conduct field operations, to encouraging tribal response to ensure the most accurate counts.

Creating an Effective Communication Plan

The Census Bureau is planning a robust Integrated Partnership and Communications program – a critical component of the effort to reach and motivate individuals in all areas of the country. Our National Partnership Program will be ramping up beginning in October 2018, and we plan to increase the number of partnership specialists who form these critical relationships in communities across the country from fewer than 800 in the 2010 Census to 1,000 specialists for the 2020 Census.

Leveraging highly localized outreach campaigns, we plan to develop customized marketing and communications materials that can be downloaded and printed for use by our American Indian and Alaska Native partners. We will be assisted in this task by g&g Advertising, a nationally recognized leader in tailored outreach to American Indians and Native Alaskan audiences and a veteran of two previous decennial census advertising programs. Together, we will be working with our tribal community partners to develop effective outreach materials.

Ensuring Up-to-Date Geographic Information

The Census Bureau has long engaged tribal governments to ensure the accuracy of tribal addresses, streets, and boundaries. This work is critical for the accurate collection, tabulation, and dissemination of census data.

In 2014, the Census Bureau and the National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding establishing a joint statistical project. Then in 2016, the

Census Bureau and Bureau of Indian Affairs signed a Memorandum of Understanding to improve the dissemination of accurate data, in furtherance of the government-to-government relationship between the United States and Indian tribes. This Memorandum of Understanding facilitates the sharing of geographic information and databases.

Each year, the Census Bureau conducts the Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS). The BAS is the only survey to collect legal boundaries from federal recognized tribes, local, county and state governments ensuring that their legal boundaries are current and accurate. Consequently, the official population counts within those boundaries are correctly recorded with the Federal Government. Every year, tribal governments use the BAS to update their federal reservation and off-reservation trust land boundaries. In the most recent 2017 BAS, we received responses from 47.0 percent of tribal governments, up slightly from 44.5 percent and 42.5 percent in 2016 and 2015, respectively. In 2018, we will be adding staff to conduct non-response follow-up which we hope will further increase these response rates.

Before every census, we offer representatives from tribal, state, and local governments the opportunity to participate in the Local Update of Census Addresses program. Through this program, governments are able to review and comment on the Census Bureau's residential address list for their jurisdiction. This program is critical for the Census Bureau as we rely on a complete and accurate address list to reach all living quarters and associated population for inclusion in the census. To date, more than 130 tribal governments have registered to review and update the Census Bureau's address list and maps as part of the Local Update of Census Addresses in preparation for the 2020 Census.

Developing Adaptive Modes for Self Response

For the first time, the 2020 Census will provide residents multiple modes for responding to the census in order to maximize self-response. So, while one option will be the Internet, individuals also have the option to respond by telephone through our Census Questionnaire Assistance call centers or through paper questionnaire (which will be mailed as a final attempt before sending enumerators into neighborhoods). In areas where American Community Survey and Federal Communications Commission data show low Internet access, we will be including a paper

questionnaire in the first Census 2020 mailing. In some areas where postal mail might not be an effective option for reaching the population, we will be delivering the questionnaire to households personally. At the same time, we will collect any address information we can to facilitate future options for communication with the household.

After giving the population an opportunity to self-respond, we will send enumerators to visit every non-responding household in every location throughout the country (with the exception of remote areas of Alaska where there will already be a full in-person enumeration, as described next). If the enumerator is unsuccessful at making contact with a member of the household after numerous visits, they will attempt to interview a nearby neighbor who could provide proxy information about the household. The intent is to obtain, at a minimum, an accurate population count for each non-responding household during this operation.

Enumerating Remote Areas of Alaska

Alaska's vast, sparsely settled areas traditionally are the first to be counted starting in January of the census year. Local census takers must start enumerating in the approximately 240 remote villages and communities while the frozen ground allows limited access. Many residents leave after the spring thaw to fish and hunt or for other warm-weather jobs, making it difficult to get an accurate count on April 1 "Census Day."

Remote Alaska enumeration has unique challenges associated with accessibility to communities in Alaska's most isolated areas, where population ranges from a few people to several hundred people. Communities are widely scattered and rarely linked by roads. For these communities, we must rely on unique modes of transportation including small planes, snowmobiles, and dogsleds. Because of the logistical challenges, we combine operations for address canvassing and enumeration into one operation called Update Enumerate. During this operation, field staff will update the address lists and maps for the villages and communities, and then conduct an in-person interview at all living quarters to complete the census questionnaire. This will be done at all housing units, group quarters, and transitory locations. We will work with our local partners to be sure all living quarters are enumerated. Outreach to begin preparing for these operations will begin next year in 2019.

Learning through Field Tests

The 2018 End-to-End Census Test began in August 2017 in Pierce County, Washington; Providence County, Rhode Island; and the Bluefield-Beckley-Oak Hill, West Virginia area with the implementation of an address canvassing operation. The in-field portion of the test will continue through August 2018 in Providence County, Rhode Island with the implementation of “peak operations” that include Internet self-response and non-response follow-up. In the address canvassing portions of the test, we had the opportunity to test all of our applications and systems and hone the address list development operations in a wide range of geographical situations, including mountainous areas and areas with low connectivity (Internet and cellular). The lessons we learned from this portion of the test will be particularly useful as we start to prepare for listing in the more remote and rural portions of the country. As the peak operations portion of the 2018 End-to-End Census Test begin in the spring, we look forward to understanding how our enumeration applications and systems function in areas with low connectivity in preparation for the challenges we will surely face when conducting the 2020 Census.

Conclusion

The 2020 Census is a complex organization of people and systems that work together to ensure that we are able to count every person living in the U.S. The Census Bureau relies on its invaluable partnership with the American Indian and Alaska Native communities to help guide us in our task. Through this partnership, we have received valuable advice we believe has made the 2020 Census stronger than ever before in its ability to connect with and represent the American Indian and Alaska Native communities.