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OVERSIGHT OF THE 2000 CENSUS: STATUS OF BUREAU OF THE CENSUS OPERATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CENSUS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT REFORM

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED SIXTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

MARCH 8, 2000

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CONTENTS

	Page
Hearing held on March 8, 2000	1
Statement of:	
Prewitt, Kenneth, Director of the Census, accompanied by John Thompson	19
Letters, statements, et cetera, submitted for the record by:	
Maloney, Hon. Carolyn B., a Representative in Congress from the State of New York:	
Letter dated March 8, 2000	11
Observation Guidelines for Census 2000 Operations	61
Prepared statement of	17
Miller, Hon. Dan, a Representative in Congress from the State of Florida, prepared statement of	5
Prewitt, Kenneth, Director of the Census:	
Letter dated March 20, 2000	45
Prepared statement of	25

OVERSIGHT OF THE 2000 CENSUS: STATUS OF BUREAU OF THE CENSUS OPERATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 2000

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CENSUS,
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 1 p.m., in room 2247, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Dan Miller (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Miller, Ryan, and Maloney.

Staff present: Jane Cobb, staff director; Timothy J. Maney, chief investigator; Chip Walker, communications director; Erin Yeatman, press secretary; Lara Chamberlain, professional staff member; Amy Althoff, clerk; David McMillen and Mark Stephenson, minority professional staff members; and Ellen Rayner, minority chief clerk.

Mr. MILLER. Good afternoon. A quorum being present, the subcommittee will come to order, and we will proceed. It is my understanding there may be a vote around 2 o'clock, so we may have to take a vote break at that time.

Good afternoon. Today, we are here to examine the ongoing operations for the 2000 census. In our monthly public review of this process, once again, Dr. Prewitt, Director of the Census Bureau is before us, and next week the GAO will come before the subcommittee as well.

Since our last hearing, there have been several new developments that have not been positive. The Salvation Army has declined to let Census enumerators into homeless shelters and soup kitchens. If there is any way that we in this subcommittee can assist you in this matter, Dr. Prewitt, or in any similar matters, please let us know.

There are also serious recruiting shortages across the country in a number of hard-to-enumerate areas. And we are all aware of the very serious addressing error of approximately 120 million prenotification letters.

Also today, this subcommittee will address the lack of access to the Census Bureau operations and information for the subcommittee, the General Accounting Office and the Census Monitoring Board.

Just last week, I spoke to the GAO, who complained of lack of access and delayed responses to information requests. The GAO made it clear to me that much of the information they requested

should be readily available to regional and local managers if they are truly getting the timely information they need to make daily decisions in the field.

The Census Monitoring Board fights tooth and nail to get information it needs to conduct its oversight responsibilities. The Census Monitoring Board was set up under agreement with the President to assist Congress in its oversight duties. Employees of the Census Monitoring Board are Title 13, sworn and entitled to all information just as this subcommittee or the GAO is. Currently, the Census Monitoring Board has more than 30 requests outstanding, refused, or delayed more than 60 days for information with the Bureau. Director Prewitt, this is unacceptable.

The experience of my own subcommittee has been troubling as well. Critical information such as recruiting numbers or contact information has not been provided in a timely manner. A recent request made to obtain the Bureau's recruiting numbers took almost 2 weeks to be answered.

Rather than just provide us the information we ask for, different delaying tactics seem to be used. In some cases, the subcommittee has been questioned as to what we plan to do with this information. This turns the role of Congress and government agencies on its head. This is the people's census. This subcommittee has a right to any and all information we deem appropriate.

While some at the Bureau may feel that oversight entities are a burden on the Census process, you must understand that it is our legal responsibility to investigate, evaluate and assess the hundreds of activities that involve the expenditure of $7 billion of public funds to carry out the constitutionally mandated decennial census.

The combined resources of this subcommittee, the GAO and the Census Monitoring Board is barely sufficient to oversee the massive undertaking of the Census Bureau. As you have so accurately noted, this is the largest peacetime mobilization in our Nation's history, with hundreds of thousands of workers and 520 local Census offices.

The combined resources of the subcommittee, the GAO, the Census Monitoring Board and the Inspector General pale in comparison to the Bureau's massive operations. We are talking about roughly 42 people between the IG, the GAO, the Census Monitoring Board and the subcommittee overseeing the 520 Census offices, hundreds of ongoing Census operations, more than 800,000 positions and $7 billion in expenditures.

By now, I am sure you are aware of my concerns regarding the unprecedented stalls and delays in gaining access to basic information. I am requesting your help in breaking down these barriers so that we—in Congress, the Census Monitoring Board, the GAO and the IG—may fulfill our responsibilities under law and in an efficient and timely manner.

Director Prewitt, you made a pledge that this would be a transparent Census. Unfortunately, it has been rather opaque. In light of these access issues, I have found it necessary to call a hearing specifically on the lack of proper access. This will be held on March 23 at 2 p.m. I hope these access concerns are sufficiently resolved well beforehand.

Last month's revelation of the addressing error made by Freedom Graphic Systems on the prenotification letter is a serious matter. The Census Bureau has spent the better part of this decade developing its Master Address File.

The heart of the Census is a good address list, because the bulk of enumeration is based on mail-out/mail back responses. Now this error doesn't appear to be contained within the MAF itself. However, the fact that the addresses were misprinted is still troubling. Regardless of how good the MAF is, if the addressing is compromised anywhere along the process it can still pose serious and, in some cases, crippling problems. This error underscores the serious need for aggressive oversight by this subcommittee.

While I have publicly urged those receiving Census forms to read them, no matter what the address they may read on the envelope, and while the Postal Service has said it will deliver the letters to the correct addresses, I cannot share your determination that this error is cosmetic and not operational.

I don't believe that anyone knows if a misaddressed envelope sent to "Resident" is less likely to be read than it otherwise would have been. The importance of the prenotification letters to the hard-to-enumerate communities, especially those not speaking English, is high.

The prenotification letter also allows those speaking one of five other languages besides English, to choose that language for the Census questionnaire. Unfortunately, there may be another problem emerging from this mailing list. The Washington Times and other newspapers are reporting today that it now seems those who speak only English are confused by the lack of explanations for the mailing and the return envelope inside. The subcommittee understood that these mailings had been fully tested in focus groups. The subcommittee will certainly want to see the focus group testing results to understand how this mailing was developed.

In light of these concerns, the subcommittee will be investigating this matter fully. We are enlisting the support of the Commerce Department's Inspector General, as well as the General Accounting Office.

This error also, once again, casts doubt on the ability of the Census Bureau to carry out one of the most complicated statistic experiments ever, better known as A.C.E.

I would like to publicly thank the U.S. Postal Service. The Postal Service has already stepped up to the plate to help the Census Bureau and, in fact, America, by making a pledge to deliver the misaddressed letters to the proper households.

Dr. Prewitt, we all know hiring is so critical to a successful Census. You note that nationally the hiring is going according to schedule; however, when one looks at hiring locally, a different picture emerges.

In recent weeks, the subcommittee staff has visited local Census offices that are having severe hiring problems in San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco and the Salt River Indian Community outside of Phoenix. Similar problems are found by the Monitoring Board in New York City.

To be fair, these visits also found local Census offices that were ahead of schedule, in Long Beach and Tukwila, WA. However, it

is the ones behind schedule that have us concerned. Here in DC, the recent stories in both the Washington Times and the Post have highlighted local hiring shortages. In fact, recent news reports have caused Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton to call for an emergency meeting among local officials to solve this problem. An emergency job summit will be held later this month, and I applaud Ms. Norton on her quick action.

I am not totally convinced that the Bureau has a handle on this hiring problem. Looking at hiring nationally does not give one a true sense of where we stand. I hope you can shed some light on these important local hiring issues. Many of these communities are hard to locate and count.

Again, Dr. Prewitt, thank you for coming before the subcommittee, and we look forward to the opportunity to ask some questions.

Mrs. Maloney.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Dan Miller follows:]

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ONE HUNDRED SIXTH CONGRESS

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STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN DAN MILLER
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CENSUS
MARCH 8, 2000 HEARING

Good afternoon. Today, we are here to examine the on-going operations for the 2000 Census. In our monthly public review of this process, once again, Dr Prewitt Director of the Census Bureau is before us. Next week the GAO will come before the subcommittee as well.

Since our last hearing, there have been several new developments that have not been positive. The Salvation Army has declined to let census enumerators into its homeless shelters and soup kitchens. If there is any way that we can assist you in this matter, or similar matters, please let us know.

There are also serious recruiting shortages across the country in a number of hard to enumerate areas. And, we are all aware of the very serious addressing error of approximately 120 million prenotification letters. Also today, this Subcommittee will address the lack of access to Census Bureau operations and information for the Subcommittee, the General Accounting Office and the Census Monitoring Board.

Just last week, I spoke with the GAO, which complained of lack of access and delayed responses to information requests. The GAO made it clear to me that much of the information it requests should be readily available to regional and local managers if it is truly going to get the timely information it needs to make daily decisions in the field.

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The experience of my own Subcommittee has been troubling as well. Critical information such as recruiting numbers or contact information has not been provided in a

timely manner. A recent request made to obtain the Bureau's recruiting numbers took almost two weeks to be answered.

Rather than just provide us the information we ask for, different delaying tactics seem to be used. In some cases the Subcommittee has been questioned as to what we planned on doing with this information. This turns the role of Congress and government agencies on its head. This is the people's census. This subcommittee has a right to any and all information we deem appropriate.

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By now, I am sure you're aware of my concerns regarding the unprecedented stalls and delays in gaining access to basic information, and I am requesting your help in breaking down these barriers so that we in Congress, The Census Monitoring Board, the GAO and the IG may fulfill our responsibilities under law and in an efficient and timely manner.

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Beyond the pure image and operational concerns this mistake raises, there are also fiscal concerns. In light of these concerns, the subcommittee will be investigating this matter fully. We are enlisting the support of the Commerce Department's Inspector General, as well as the General Accounting Office.

This error, once again, casts doubt on the ability of the Census Bureau to carry out one of the most complicated statistical experiments ever, better known as A-C-E.

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Dr. Prewitt, we all know hiring is so critical to a successful census. You note that nationally the hiring is going according to schedule. However, when one looks at the hiring locally, a different picture emerges. In recent weeks, the subcommittee staff has visited Local Census Offices that are having severe hiring problems in San Diego, LA, San Francisco and the Salt River Indian Community outside of Phoenix.

To be fair, these visits also found LCOs that were ahead of schedule in Long Beach and Tukwila, Washington. However, it is the ones behind schedule that have us very concerned. Here in D.C., recent stories in both the Washington Times and the Washington Post have highlighted local hiring shortages. In fact recent news reports have caused Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton to call for an emergency meeting among local officials to solve this problem. I applaud Ms. Norton on her quick action.

I am not totally convinced that the Bureau has a handle on this problem. I hope you can shed some more light on these important local hiring issues. Many of these communities are the hard to count.

Again, Dr. Prewitt, thank you for coming before the Subcommittee.

Mrs. MALONEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome again, Dr. Prewitt.

As the Census Bureau begins the most intensive operations of the 2000 census, Congress and the American public need to stay informed on the progress of the largest peacetime mobilization in American history.

I am happy to say, from reading your testimony, Dr. Prewitt, that it appears that the 2000 census operations are on schedule, and as of today, there are no major problems. A year ago, many prophets of doom questioned the likely success of the 2000 census. While we are far from done, I think we can all take pride in the excellent work of the career professionals at the Census Bureau in successfully meeting the major milestones to date.

Dr. Prewitt, some might have scoffed if you had appeared before this committee a year ago and predicted that today the Census Bureau would have all 520 local Census offices up and running, fully equipped, with computers and telecommunications installed and totally operational; that the Master Address File of 120 million addresses, which may be the most complete ever, due to improved processes, including LUCA and new construction programs, would be completed and in use; that one of my favorite initiatives, the Census in the Schools Programs, would have exceeded its original goals and sent out over 1.3 million teaching kits to schools around the Nation; that the telephone questionnaire assistance centers would be opened, running and fully operational; that the data capture centers and the software they use would be tested and already processing forms; that questionnaires would already be delivered to rural areas; that questionnaires would already be filed through the Internet; that over 90,000 partnerships between the Census and cities, towns, businesses and churches would be up and running; that the highly acclaimed paid advertising campaign would now be going into full gear.

In the interest of time, I won't keep going through all of the lists of initiatives that your office has put into place, but I do want to mention my new favorite Census promotional tool, the Census Promotional Tour Bus that is on the road and educating people.

I spent a day riding around my region on the bus, talking to people. I think it is absolutely an excellent tool. I wish we had more of them in our areas or regions across the country. I think they are very, very effective.

I am sure there are some even in this room who would have—well, let us be polite—questioned you for being overly optimistic. More importantly, even a few months ago, if you would have told this committee that recruiting would be above target and going well, I can only imagine what some would have said. While there are places in the country that have recruiting problems, on a national level, recruiting is above target.

Given the Clinton-Gore prosperity our Nation is currently experiencing, with historically low unemployment levels, the success of the Bureau's recruiting efforts is all the more remarkable.

I don't want to imply that things are perfect, because there is still a great deal of work that needs to be done, and we know there will be problems. The recent mishap with the addressing of the notification letter is an example. I would like to mention that I did

receive my letter; I have it right here. It came over the weekend, so it came to my home, and it was delivered.

I am pleased that the Post Office reports that there have been no operational problems with this mailing, and they should be commended for the extra effort taken to ensure that all 120 million letters arrived on time.

But on the whole, we are in as good as shape as one could hope, given our recent history and given the fact that the Census Bureau had to revamp its program only last year to integrate $1.6 billion worth of additional effort as a result of litigation by the opponents of modern statistical methods.

In fact, I would say that one reason the Census is on track as of today is because many of us in Congress and President Clinton resisted the efforts of some to micromanage the Census and left that up to the professionals in the Census department.

I would only hope that as we proceed and problems develop that we can keep all the people looking over your shoulder—this committee, the Monitoring Board, the GAO, the IG, the National Academy of Sciences and the advisory groups—that we can keep them over your shoulder and out of your lap, so that you can do your job without being disrupted.

Mr. Chairman, I know you share my concern that we cannot harm the Census with overzealous oversight. While we should conduct oversight, we cannot afford to do so in such an overpowering way that the staff of the Census Bureau cannot get their job done.

And in talking about oversight, I would like to really put in the record the cochair of the Census Monitoring Board, Mr. Blackwell's letter, which he carbon-copied to many people, but he left me out, in which he notes 31 areas, centers that he wants to see. I would like that in the record along with my comments.

[The information referred to follows:]

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David Murray
A. Mark Neuman
Joe D. Whitley

Fred Ashell
Executive Director

March 8, 2000

Dr. Kenneth Prewitt
Director, Bureau of the Census
DIR 3-2049
4700 Silver Hill Road
Suitland, MD 20746

Dear Dr. Prewitt:

The Congressional Members of the U.S. Census Monitoring Board have selected a number of local census offices for our field staff to visit over the course of decennial operations. In accord with Public Law 105 – 119 §210, please allow access to these offices and their staff.

A schedule of visits for the next 20 days is attached. Each visit will consist of a single member of the field staff conducting an interview with the LCO manager and/or additional members of the LCO staff. Total time for each visit will generally not exceed an hour.

Each interview will review some or all of these topics: HTE enumeration plans and status, recruiting and hiring, partnership, office administration, and materials. Additional topics may be discussed, on a case-by-case basis.

Please do not arrange for regional office staff, senior Bureau employees, or Commerce Department officials to accompany our staff on LCO visits. We have reviewed the Bureau's suggested guidelines for oversight, and note regional offices have received instruction to accompany all Monitoring Board staff. However, free and open exchange during these interviews is vital to our oversight in the field, and we feel that openness would be compromised by the presence of senior Bureau or Commerce staff.

We recognize each LCO is working under increasingly strict demands on time and personnel, and will make every effort to limit the necessary burden of oversight. We will also make every effort to coordinate with other auditing entities such as the Subcommittee on the Census, the General Accounting Office, and the Office of the Inspector General, so as not to overburden any one local office. LCOs that have been selected for GAO attention have been noted. Our understanding is that the IG plans to be in the field the week of March 27, which is not included in this schedule. Nevertheless, dates are subject to change without notice.

Thank you for your continued assistance and cooperation.

Sincerely,

J. Kenneth Blackwell
Co-Chair, Census Monitoring Board
Congressional Members

cc: The Honorable Dan Burton, Chairman, Government Reform and Oversight Committee
The Honorable Dan Miller, Chairman, Subcommittee on the Census
Anthony Black, liaison, Bureau of the Census
J. Christopher Mihm, General Accounting Office
Jonnie Frazier, Office of the Inspector General

3/22 -31/2000 – Visits with 27 LCOs

Following is the list of LCO visits planned through the end of March by the Congressional Members of the U.S. Census Monitoring Board. Please note, this list is not exhaustive – Monitoring Board staff plan additional visits to LCOs not listed here. Members of the Presidential Monitoring Board staff will be notified of each visit, and invited to attend.

ATLANTA REGION

State of Georgia

Atlanta West, 2948	**Atlanta, GA 30303**	**(404) 524-2578**	**William Rankin**
Dalton, 2957	**Dalton, GA 30721**	**(706) 277-0608**	**William Rankin**

BOSTON REGION

State of Connecticut

New Haven, 2114	**New Haven, CT 06510**	**(203) 498-0117**	**Fran Sullivan**

CHARLOTTE REGION

State of Tennessee

Nashville, 2482	Nashville, TN 37202	(615) 736-2243	William Rankin

State of North Carolina

Monroe, 2823	Monroe, NC 28112	(704) 225-0765	William Rankin

State of Virginia

Richmond, 2852	Richmond, VA 23219	(804) 771-8513	William Rankin

CHICAGO REGION

State of Illinois

Chicago – Near South, 2517	**Chicago, IL 60609**	**(773) 624-0107**	**Raymond Butler**

State of Wisconsin			
Milwaukee, 2549	Milwaukee, WI 53203	(414) 297-3721	Raymond Butler
State of Indiana			
Indianapolis, 2536	Indianapolis, IN 46204	(317) 226-0403	Raymond Butler
DALLAS REGION			
State of Mississippi			
Greenville, 3021	Greenville, MS 38701	(662) 378-1027	Martha Martinez
State of Texas			
San Antonio – Central, 3049	San Antonio, TX 78228	(210) 731-3375	Martha Martinez
State of Louisiana			
Orleans Parish, 3018	New Orleans, LA 70113	(504) 525-0613 3018	Martha Martinez
DENVER REGION			
State of Arizona			
Phoenix – South, 3114	Phoenix, AZ 85004	(602) 379-4131	Martha Martinez
Window Rock, 3118	Window Rock, AZ	(520) 810-3152	Martha Martinez
Tucson, 3117	**Tucson, AZ 85713**	**(520) 879-0065**	**Martha Martinez**
State of Colorado			
Denver, 3121	**Denver, CO 80202**	**(303) 312-7965**	**Martha Martinez**
DETROIT REGION			
State of Ohio			
Cleveland, 2433	**Cleveland, OH 44114**	**(216) 937-0001**	**Myke Clarett**
Detroit West, 2415	Detroit, MI 48226	(313) 226-2141	Myke Clarett

KANSAS CITY REGION

State of Minnesota

St. Paul, 2631	St. Paul, MN 55101	(651) 290-4294	Fran Sullivan

LOS ANGELES REGION

State of California

San Diego South, 3236	Chula Vista, CA 91911	(619) 628-1500	Walter Liang

NEW YORK REGION

Brooklyn, 2229	**Brooklyn, NY 11223**	**(718) 382- 3910**	**Sara Salvide**
New York North, 2234	**Washington Heights, NY 10033**		**Sara Salvide**

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Mrs. MALONEY. Again, as we proceed, there will be problems, big and small, but I would remind everyone that this is a massive, complicated process. I read in today's Washington Post, and I have—they have an article here, a small article, that a few hundred people out of the 120 million contacted complained they were confused about the postage-paid envelope included; for those who know what they are reading—and that story is good news—33,000 envelopes were returned from people requesting language forms on the first day.

In America, to have a few hundred people call and complain about a mailing to 120 million people is pretty good, especially if it guarantees Americans with limited English skills can respond to the Census.

As I said, Mr. Chairman, I am happy to learn that the timetables and tests for the 2000 census are currently on track. I look forward to hearing the details of the many Census operations from our witness, Director Prewitt.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Carolyn B. Maloney follows:]

14th District • New York

Congresswoman

Carolyn **Maloney**

Reports

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Statement of the Hon. Carolyn B. Maloney
Hearing on the Status of Census 2000 Operations

March 8, 2000

Thank you Mr. Chairman, and welcome again Dr. Prewitt. I would like to thank you Dr. Prewitt for taking time out of what must be an incredibly busy schedule to appear before us today. As the Census Bureau begins the most intensive operations of the 2000 Census, Congress and the American public need to stay informed on the progress of the largest peace-time mobilization in American history. I'm happy to say that from reading your testimony Dr. Prewitt, it appears that the 2000 Census operations are on schedule and as of today there are no major problems.

A year ago, many prophets of doom questioned the likely success of the 2000 Census. While we are far from done, I think we can all take pride in the excellent work of the career professionals at the Census Bureau in successfully meeting the major milestones to date.

Dr. Prewitt, some might have scoffed if you had appeared before this committee a year ago and predicted that today the Census Bureau would have all 520 local Census offices up and running, fully equipped, with computers and telecommunications installed and operational; that the Master Address File of 120 million addresses, which may be the most complete ever due to improved processes, including LUCA and new construction programs, would be completed and in use; that one of my favorite initiatives, the Census in the Schools Program, would have exceeded its original goals and sent over 1.3 million teaching kits to schools around the nation; that the telephone questionnaire assistance centers would be open, running and fully operational; that the data capture centers and the software they use would be tested and already processing forms; that questionnaires would already be delivered in rural areas; that questionnaires would already be filed thru the Internet; that over 90,000 partnerships between the Census and cities, towns, businesses, and churches would be up and running; that the highly acclaimed paid advertising campaign would now be going at full gear. In the interest of time I will not go on with this list much longer, but I do want to mention my new favorite census promotional tool, the Census Promotional Tour Bus is on the road and educating people across the country. In the future, I am hopeful we can have 20 of these useful tools in each region.

I am sure there are some, even in this room, who would have well, let's be polite, *questioned* you for being overly optimistic.

More importantly, even a few months ago, if you would have told this committee that recruiting would be above target and going well, I can only imagine what some would have said. While there are places in the country that have recruiting problems, on a national level recruiting is above target. Given the Clinton/Gore prosperity our nation is currently experiencing, with its historically low unemployment levels, the success of the Bureau's recruiting efforts is all the more remarkable.

I don't want to imply that things are perfect, because there is still a lot of work to be done, and we know there will be problems. The recent mishap with the addressing of the notification letter is an example. I would like to mention that I received my letter in the mail. In fact, here it is. I am pleased that the Post Office reports that there have been no operational problems with this mailing, and they should be commended for the extra effort taken to ensure that all 120 million letters arrived on time.

But on the whole, we are in as good a shape as one could hope given our recent history. And given the fact that the Census Bureau had to revamp its program only last year integrate over 1.6 billion dollars worth of additional effort as a result of litigation by the opponents of modern statistical methods. In fact, I would say that one reason the Census is on track as of today is because many of us in Congress, and President Clinton, resisted the efforts of some to micro-manage and left it to you and your staff to move forward as best you could given the difficult assignment you were given.

I would only hope that as we proceed and problems develop that we can keep all of the people looking over your shoulder, this Committee, the Monitoring Board, the GAO, the IG, the National Academy, and the advisory groups- that we can keep them over your shoulder and not in your lap disrupting your job. Mr. Chairman, I know you share my concern that we not harm the Census with over zealous oversight. While we should conduct oversight, we cannot afford to be so overpowering that the staff of the Census cannot get their job done.

Again, as we proceed, there will be problems big and small, but I would remind everyone that this is a massive, complicated process. I read in today's Washington Post a story about the response to the advance letter and that a few hundred people out of the 120 million contacted complained they were confused about the postage-paid, envelope included. Well for those who know what they are reading that story is good news. 33,000 envelopes were returned from people requesting language forms on the first day. In America, to have a few hundred people call and complain about a mailing to 120 million people is pretty darn good, especially if it guarantees Americans with limited English language skills can respond to the Census.

As I said, Mr. Chairman, I am happy to learn that the time-tables and tasks for the 2000 Census are currently on track. I look forward to hearing the details of the many Census operations from our witness, Director Prewitt.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Mr. MILLER. The record will identify that all three answered in the affirmative. And, Dr. Prewitt, your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF KENNETH PREWITT, DIRECTOR OF THE CENSUS, ACCOMPANIED BY JOHN THOMPSON

Mr. PREWITT. Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I do have an opening statement. I will try to go through it quickly. I might say that it does not address the issues raised in your opening statement; instead, it addresses the issues that are of course in the invitation letter.

I would hope that before the hearing is completed, I will have a chance to address the issues you raised in your opening statements.

Mr. MILLER. The first set of questions.

Mr. PREWITT. Thank you. Let me start by identifying the major operations and preparation for census 2000 that have been successfully completed so far, to reiterate some of the things that Congresswoman Maloney just mentioned.

The Master Address File of 120 million addresses is, of course, complete and we think quite accurate.

Our field network of 12 regional offices and 520 Census offices, local offices, are open and are hard at work.

We printed 85 different Census forms, which will go to the addresses in our address file, and developed and implemented our ambitious paid advertising campaign and signed up 90,000 partners.

All of this happened without a glitch? No, of course not. There were endless issues, large and small, that had to be resolved.

The Census is a vast, multipart, rapidly moving system involving hundreds of operations and hundreds of thousands of temporary employees. On a daily basis, we have to deal with problems such as the fire in one, flood in another of our local Census offices, the need to develop special procedures for handling the temporarily displaced persons from the North Carolina flood, to deal with the issue that you addressed in your own opening comments, the Salvation Army response to our attempt to count in their soup kitchens, the backlogs caused by the higher-than-expected demand for Census in the Schools, two separate bomb threats in a local Census office, a misspelling on a poster, public confusion among some English-speaking residents about the lack of instruction in the advance letter.

Indeed, another small issue that has come up—and I want to thank you and Mrs. Maloney for your statements concerning this—was the recent mailing that appeared to mimic an official Census form, but in fact, was simply a fundraising device.

We are very concerned that the deceptive mailings could reduce mail response by sowing confusion about what is or what is not an official Census form. The point is, we are in the process of successfully dealing with each of these issues, and the list is far from exhaustive. New ones will take their place tomorrow and the next day and every day until the census is completed.

While such issues require attention and resources, while they can be frustrating, while they often generate news stories we then

try to correct, they are not of a nature to put the census at risk. Such an issue could arise, but to date it has not. Indeed, the most significant issue to date has been the addressing error on the advance letter, but as we all know, this was not of a character that put the census at risk. And I will address in more detail, of course, the issue of the advance letter in the question-and-answer period, if you wish.

I should say that all of our indications are that the advance letter is being correctly mailed and, indeed, it is being read. I will give you one indicator of that, sir, the advance letter has a website address which is a job website address. Prior to the mailing of the advance letter, we were running about 100,000 hits a day to that website. The last—yesterday or the day before yesterday, last time I was able to get the data, there were 1 million hits on that website, 1 million hits. That is in a multiple of 10, so that suggested to me that people are reading the letter and responding to it. And as the Congresswoman just said, we are already getting a flow of requests for our language forms.

We have taken additional steps in our advertising campaign with our community partners and through the media to stress the importance of the advance letter. We have done this because we do stress its importance, particularly because of the fact that it is the vehicle for getting a language form; but also because it is a way to address the job issue, and it is a way to increase awareness, although I can say that awareness right now is very high about the census.

The point is that when I last testified to you, I pledged to you that I would bring to your attention any problems in the implementation of census 2000 that, in my judgment, could put the census at risk. After that testimony, I subsequently advised you by letter of the several categories in which a serious or systemic problem could occur in the current timeframe, that is, between that testimony and today.

In that letter, I identified the fact that we had to launch our update/leave operation, and that if we were unsuccessful in launching that, that would be serious. I addressed the fact of possible problems with our payroll system, our problems filling our enumerator positions, our address file problem that would prevent our employees from being able to fulfill their responsibilities, or a breakdown in the telephone questionnaire assistance operation. All of those operations had been launched on schedule and successfully. It doesn't mean something won't happen tomorrow, but as of today, there is simply nothing going on in the Census operations that puts the census itself at risk.

I want to add to that list because a lot of new things are going to happen between now and the next testimony—and I now refer to the March 29th testimony when I am scheduled to testify before a different committee, that is, the House Appropriations Subcommittee of which you are a member, of course, Mr. Chairman.

By March 29th, we expect to complete the update/leave operation, mail out the questionnaires in the mailout/mailback areas, begin the data capture process, start enumeration of special populations, and begin reporting to the Nation the mailback response rate as part of our "90 Plus Five" campaign.

Major problems could develop during this period, including breakdowns in data capture systems or in questionnaire delivery, unexpectedly low mail response rates, any event that could undermine faith in the confidentiality of the data, such as a hacker on our Internet site, or a failure to meet our promise to provide the mailback response rate to the public.

I don't anticipate those happening, but I want to put them on the record as the categories of things that I would quickly get to your attention if we begin to experience serious problems.

So I today renew my pledge to keep you informed should major census-threatening problems develop in these areas or any others. I am not anticipating such problems. I expect our scheduled hearing will keep you apprised of any potential changes needed to ensure that census 2000 data are of the highest quality.

You specifically asked, of course, about a number of operations. I will try to cover those quickly. You asked about the status of the census 2000 operational timeline, and readiness for key activities. As I mentioned already, we began the update/leave operation on March 3rd, as planned. We are running today slightly ahead of schedule in terms of getting the update/leave questionnaires out. Census enumerators are leaving questionnaires at approximately 24 million housing units, including Puerto Rico, that have several different address types.

Telephone questionnaire assistance centers also began on March 3rd, and will run through June 8th with six toll-free telephone numbers in English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese and Tagalog, where people can call to get assistance in filling out their questionnaires, get language assistance guides or provide their Census questionnaire information over the phone. Indeed, we have already recorded 500 short forms over the telephone system. The questionnaire assistance center is up and running. That doesn't mean we won't have a problem with it tomorrow, but as of today, I am confident that we are able to handle the flow of telephone calls.

We have also identified 27,000 sites for our questionnaire assistance center operations. And as I already mentioned, we have already mailed the advance letter, and in 5 days—indeed, sometimes the Post Office gets a bit ahead of us, so I am already getting reports that some forms are out—but in 5 days, from March 13th to March 15th, the Postal Service will deliver questionnaires to some 98 million addresses in the mailout/mailback areas. These questionnaires are all at the postal delivery centers and are ready to be delivered.

Also, beginning March 13th and continuing through March and April, Census enumerators will visit about half a million housing units in our list/enumerate areas, in an operation similar to that initiated in Alaska on January 19th. These are the remote, sparsely populated areas where it is not efficient to compile a pre-census address list.

And then on March 20th, we will mail out a reminder card to those housing units we are asking to return a form by mail. Many will already have mailed back their form, but this reminder card will spur others to do so as soon as possible.

So those are some of the things that are already in place and then some things that we anticipate in the next several weeks, all of which are reasonably large categories of things. I want to put those things in one pile and the kinds of other problems we deal with every day, all day long, in a separate pile; they are simply different kinds of things.

We are dealing with the small issues as best we can as we go. They are the ones that stir the press reports, but they are not of the sort that are putting the census at risk.

You asked in your letter of invitation about the status of hiring goals. Hiring continues to progress well. All hiring goals for the update/leave operation have been met; that is, we now have 73,000 people out there doing the job. Our goal is to have a qualified applicant approval of 2.4 million individuals, and as of today, or as of Friday when we collected these data, we had recruited over 1.8 million qualified applicants, 74 percent of those who are needed, and slightly ahead of our goal from March 1, which is 70 percent.

Of course, not every office is on target, and for these, we take special steps. These steps range in intensity based upon where a local Census office is in relation to the goal. If an office is below, but near the goal, for example, we increase the recruiting staff, distribute fliers, use targeted postcard mailings or seek help from our partners. If an office is at less than 75 percent of the goal, we intensify the activities, including things like neighborhood blitzes, making special appeals to community-based organizations, and bringing in outside expertise with respect to recruitment. As a last resort, we are prepared to raise wages to assure an adequate pool of workers.

Of course, we concentrate these efforts depending upon the task at hand and, thus, first made certain that the local Census offices with heavy update/leave operations had sufficient staff. They did and do in every case. Now, of course, our attention turns to nonresponse followup due to start April 19th.

Given the time available, the fact that we are front loading, and the capacity to take extraordinary steps if necessary, being able to staff the Census operations is not what is currently keeping me awake at night; other things are, but that is not.

You asked us to address the status of data capture systems, including recent test results and the subsequent migration to the "two pass" system. The Census Bureau recently completed the final operations test and dry run according to plan in a preproduction operations test at all four sites.

During the operations test and dry run in two of our sites, we learned that key data required for many write-in items and some check-box entries was taking longer than originally estimated. Based on these test results, we have implemented a two-pass processing system. In the first pass, we will capture the 100 percent data that is asked of everyone and some of which is necessary to provide the constitutionally mandated apportionment numbers to the President. In the second pass, we will capture the sample data from the long forms.

This approach ensures that we will meet all processing deadlines and provides us with some staffing contingency. The decision has no impact on the schedule for the release of information for appor-

tionment and redistricting, and only minimal impact on the release of sample data.

During the four-site test, staff introduced and successfully tested the first pass of the "two pass" software for the 100 percent data items. And we are developing the testing schedule for the second pass.

You asked about any difficulties in confronting local or regional Census offices. All local Census offices and regional offices are functioning, that was my report 10 minutes ago. There could have been a fire in the last 10 minutes, there could have been a flood; you don't know; 520 is a large number of entities, something happens to one of them almost every day. But as of right now, they are all up and functioning.

We are working closely with GAO, where we have specific problems, like the water problem in the New York city office. But the key thing is they are there. They all have their telephone installations, and they are handing calls on schedule.

You asked about preparation issues concerning Internet response to census 2000 short form questionnaires. Internet data collection and questionnaire assistance began on March 3rd. For the first time, the Census Bureau is providing questionnaire assistance over the Internet and the option of answering the short form questionnaire via the Internet. The questionnaire assistance effort provides on-line help to respondents who need help in completing either a traditional paper questionnaire or the web-based Internet short form, as well as providing answers to frequently asked questions about census 2000.

Of course, the Internet data collection option allows respondents to answer an English language version of the short form questionnaire over a special secure Internet website, if they can provide a valid housing unit identification number from the paper questionnaire.

Indeed, using the bar code from my correctly delivered advance letter, I completed my form the other night in less than 3 minutes on the Internet. Internet data collection will operate until April 15, 2000. The questionnaire assistance part of the operations will end the first week of June.

You asked about the status of and issues concerning questionnaire assistance centers and "Be-Counted" questionnaire sites. Our partnership staff are working with community groups, business leaders and local government officials to identify the Be-Counted sites appropriate to each community. Staff have confirmed over 15,000 sites at these locations, which will operate from March 31 to April 11. People who believe they did not receive a census form, believe they were not included on the census questionnaire returned by their household, or have no usual address on census day will be able to pick up a Be-Counted questionnaire.

The staff have also identified over 27,000 questionnaire assistance centers, which will operate from today through mid-April and will provide assistance to individuals who might have difficulty completing the questionnaire because of language or other barriers. Sites include, but are not limited to, community and civic centers, banks, libraries, schools, grocery stores, health centers, and places of worship.

We have selected and trained paid clerks, and we are seeking additional volunteers. We use our paid clerks based on their ability to provide appropriate language or literacy assistance in communities that need this type of support. All individuals providing assistance at questionnaire assistance centers, whether paid or voluntary, have been sworn to protect the confidentiality of individual information on the questionnaires.

The Census Bureau was selective in training staff to serve as Be-Counted clerks in the local Census offices. These clerks will conduct advance visits to all sites to ensure their suitability, set up the sites, resupply forms as necessary and close down the sites at the end of the operation.

Unlike questionnaire assistance centers, the Be-Counted sites are not staffed. They simply are places where people can pick up a form and mail it back.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, I repeat at this point, 24 days from census day, I am aware of no serious problem that would put the census at risk. The next month is crucial. I cannot promise you that serious problems will not occur; I can only promise to keep you informed. The timing was just right.

Thank you, sir.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Prewitt follows:]

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF

KENNETH PREWITT

DIRECTOR, U.S. BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

Before the Subcommittee on the Census

Committee on Government Reform

U.S. House of Representatives

March 8, 2000

Mr. Chairman, Mrs. Maloney, and Members of the Subcommittee:

I welcome this opportunity to report on the status of Census 2000. When I last testified, we were 53 days from Census Day, April 1. Now we are 24 days away and the clock is racing. Much has happened in the last month. The next few weeks will be the most demanding phase of Census 2000 thus far.

To put things in perspective, we need to take stock of all the major operations and preparations for Census 2000 that we have successfully completed so far. I refer to the production of the Master Address File of 120 million addresses, which was developed through numerous complex operations, including working with the U.S. Postal Service, the rural address listing operation, the block canvassing operation in urban areas, and two major phases in 1998 and 1999 of the Local Update of Census Addresses. We have successfully established our field network of 12 regional census centers and 520 local census offices--they are open, have already been working hard, and are ready for the next phase of operations. We have successfully printed the questionnaires that will go to each of the addresses on our address file. We have successfully developed and begun implementation of our ambitious paid advertising campaign. We have idenfitied nearly 90,000 partnerships. We continue to be on track to take the best census we can.

In an operation as large as the decennial census, there are going to be numerous and constant issues that present problems for the census. The census is a vast, multi-part and rapidly moving system, involving hundreds of operations and hundreds of thousands of temporary employees. On a daily basis we have to deal with problems such as:

- the fire a few months ago in one Chicago area local census office;
- the need to develop special procedures to handle persons temporarily displaced by last fall's flooding in North Carolina;

- developing procedures for cases where census enumerators may not have full access to facilities serving special populations, such as Salvation Army soup kitchens and mobile food vans;
- backlogs caused by a higher than expected demand for Census in Schools packages;
- backlogs in the security check we do for job applicants;
- a bomb threat in one Kentucky local census office.

We have successfully dealt with each of these issues (and the list is far from exhaustive), but new ones will take their place tomorrow and the next day and every day until the census is completed. While such issues require attention and resources, while they can be frustrating, while they often generate news stories we then try to correct, they are not of a nature to put the census at risk. Such an issue could arise, but to date it has not.

The most significant issue to date has been the addressing error on the advance letter, but it was not of a character that put the census at risk. We learned two weeks ago that an addressing error on the advance letter occurred during printing and addressing by a private vendor. It should have been caught earlier by our quality assurance process and we accept full responsibility for our failure to detect it. An extra digit was added in front of the street address of every letter. Fortunately, the U.S. Postal Service, which has been a very cooperative partner in this effort, use automated sorting machines to read the proper address from the barcode. The USPS delivered the advance letter beginning March 1 in the update/leave areas and beginning March 6 and continuing through today in the mailout/mailback areas. We have checked and determined that no other mailings are subject to the error.

I emphasize that the census questionnaires, which will be mailed beginning March 13, are addressed correctly and this incident with the advance letter does not affect the production, mailing, or delivery of any other census mail. We have taken additional steps in our advertising campaign, with our community partners, and through the media to stress the importance of opening and reading the advance letter. We have done this because we want everyone to open and read the advance letter; it's an important part of our mail strategy. But in addition to alerting everyone that their census form is coming and that it is important to answer, this mailing also offers the opportunity for those who need a questionnaire in one of five languages other than English (Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Tagalog) to request one. So we took this problem very seriously and took aggressive steps to deal with it.

I also want to thank you and Mrs. Maloney for your statements concerning a recent mailing that appeared to mimic an official census form, but in fact was simply a fundraising device. We are very concerned that deceptive mailings could reduce mail response by sowing confusion about what is or is not an official census form. This is what an official census envelope looks like and we want everyone to open it, fill out the form inside, and mail it back.

When I last testified, I said that I would bring to the committee's attention any problems in the implementation of Census 2000 that could place the census at risk. I subsequently advised you by letter of the several categories in which a serious or systemic problem could occur in the current time frame. This list of potential problems included the update/leave operation, which successfully began on March 3. Other major categories of potential problems include: problems with our payroll system that would prevent us from paying our employees on a timely basis; widespread problems filling enumerator positions, despite our extensive pool of qualified applicants; problems with the Census 2000 address file that would prevent our employees from being able to fulfill their responsibilities; or a major breakdown in the telephone questionnaire assistance operation.

The next phase of the census adds things to this list. Between today and March 29, when I am next scheduled to testify before the Congress--though on that occasion to the House appropriations subcommittee, of which you are a member, Mr. Chairman--we expect to complete the update/leave operation, mail out questionnaires in the mailout/mailback areas, begin the data capture process, start the enumeration of special populations, and begin reporting to the nation the mailback response rate as part of our *'90 plus Five* campaign. Major problems that could develop during this period include: breakdowns in data capture systems or in questionnaire delivery; unexpectedly low mail response rates; any event that could undermine faith in the confidentiality of the data, such as a hacker on our Internet site; or a failure to meet our promise to provide the mailback response rate to the public.

I today renew my pledge to keep you informed should major census-threatening problems develop in these areas, or any other. Not anticipating such problems, I expect that our scheduled hearings will keep you apprised of any potential changes needed to ensure that Census 2000 data are of the highest quality.

Update on Operational Status

In your letter of invitation, you asked for **The status and a brief overview of the Census 2000 operational timeline, and readiness for key activities.** As I mentioned earlier, we began the update/leave operation on March 3, as planned. Census enumerators are leaving questionnaires at approximately 24 million housing units in areas (including Puerto Rico) that have several different address types. These areas are mostly in small towns and rural areas where address systems have less geographic structure. Update/leave will continue throughout March. All local census offices conducting update/leave operations are fully staffed.

Telephone questionnaire assistance (TQA) also began on March 3 and will run through June 8. There are 6 toll-free telephone numbers (in English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Tagalog) where people can call to get assistance in filling out their questionnaire, get replacement questionnaires, get language assistance guides, or provide their census questionnaire information. Beginning today, and continuing through mid-April we also will conduct questionnaire assistance center operations at pre-designated walk-in sites. We now have identified over 27,000 such sites.

We designed the TQA system to handle a limited volume of calls the first few days. We will have more TQA operators available to answer calls at peak. If the volume is heavier than expected in the early phase, perhaps because our partners prematurely publicize the telephone number, or if we underestimated the peak workload, this would strain the TQA operation.

As mentioned above, as of today we have mailed the advance letter. The purpose of this letter is to inform householders that they will soon get their questionnaire and to encourage them to mail it back. We also provide an opportunity in this letter for those who want a form in Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, or Tagalog to request one. For that reason, we are making every effort to reach out to those language-isolated communities to take advantage of this opportunity, despite the stray number on the address.

In just 5 days, from March 13 through March 15, the U.S. Postal Service will deliver questionnaires to some 98 million addresses in what we call mailout/mailback areas of the country. These addresses are generally in urban areas but can occur in small and mid-sized towns and even some rural areas. The questionnaires are at the postal delivery centers and are ready to be delivered.

Also beginning March 13, and continuing throughout March and April, census enumerators will visit about half a million housing units in list/enumerate areas, in an operation similar to that initiated in Alaska on January 19. These are remote, sparsely populated areas where it is not efficient to compile a precensus address list. At the time enumerators visit each housing unit, they will list the unit and complete a questionnaire. Also at this time, we will begin the update/enumerate operation, which is conducted in communities with special enumeration needs and where most housing units may not have house number and street name addresses. These areas include selected American Indian Reservations, unincorporated Spanish-speaking communities along the border of Texas and Mexico (*colonias*), and resort areas with high concentrations of seasonably vacant housing units.

Beginning on March 20, we will mail out a reminder card to those housing units we are asking to return a form by mail. Many will have already mailed back their forms, but this reminder will spur others to do so as soon as possible.

Hiring and Marketing

You also asked in your letter of invitation for **The status of the hiring process with respect to March 1, 2000 hiring goals.** Hiring continues to progress well. All hiring goals for the update/leave operation have been met. Our goal is to have a qualified applicant pool of 2.4 million individuals, and we have recruited over 1.8 million qualified applicants, 74 percent of those needed, and slightly ahead of our goal for March 1, which is 70 percent. We are taking special steps to bring all local census offices up to the goal. These steps cover a range of intensity, based on where a local census office is in relation to the goal. If an office is at or near the goal, for example, we might increase recruiting staff, distribute flyers, use targeted postcard mailings, or seek help from our partners. If an office is at less than 75% of the goal, we would intensify activities to include advertising, neighborhood blitzes, making special appeals to community based organizations,

bringing in expert recruiting teams, and so on. As a last resort, we are prepared to raise wages to assure an adequate pool of workers.

I also want to provide an update on marketing issues. On February 14, we unveiled a special advertising campaign to stress the confidentiality of census information. We believe that one of the reasons people might not mail back their census forms is that many people fear that their personal information will be shared with other government agencies. Of course, this is simply not true. Census data are strictly confidential and will not be shared with any other government agency, not the Internal Revenue Service, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, or any other law enforcement organization. President Clinton reinforced this message of census confidentiality on February 14 when he spoke at an award ceremony involving the League of United Latin American Citizens. To reinforce this message further, we have unveiled three public service announcements featuring Major League baseball players Ivan Rodriguez of the Texas Rangers, Derek Jeter of the New York Yankees, and Barry Bonds of the San Francisco Giants.

These psa's focus on the confidentiality of the census and will run on broadcast and cable networks and there will be a fourth psa that will run on Spanish-language networks.

We are getting additional help from the Catholic Church to convince people that it's safe to answer the census. On February 20, I had the distinct pleasure to join Archbishop Patrick Flores and Representative Charlie Gonzalez at a mass in the San Fernando Cathedral in San Antonio to encourage participation and support for the census.

At the last hearing, I mentioned that in mid-February, 12 vans would set out from 12 locations on a Road Tour across the country stopping at community events to promote Census 2000. They will operate until April 15. I was fortunate enough to be invited to appear on NBC's *Today Show* on February 16 to kickoff the van tour and promote the census. Other recent van appearances have included the Grammy music awards in Los Angeles and an event in Chicago attended by the Rev. Jesse Jackson and former boxer Rubin "Hurricane" Carter. Each vehicle is equipped with exhibits, videos, printed information, and other giveaways to spread the message that Census 2000 is on its way. The Road Tour underscores our belief that Census 2000 is a national civic celebration.

Next week is "Teach Census Week," a special phase of our Census in Schools program in which we are encouraging every participating classroom teacher to teach a lesson on the census. So far, we have shipped over 1.3 million Census in Schools teacher kits to the schools; these packages contain lesson plans and wall maps. In addition, take-home materials have been shipped to all elementary school teachers and to all social studies teachers in junior high and middle schools. Again, I want to thank the many Members of Congress who have sponsored or participated in Census in Schools events in their districts.

Other Specific Issues Listed in the Letter of Invitation

- **The status of data capture systems (DCS 2000), including recent test results and the subsequent migration to the "two pass" system.**

The Census Bureau recently completed the final operations test and dry run according to plan and a pre-production operations test at all four sites. During the operations test and dry run in two of our sites, we learned that data keying (required for many write in items and some checkbox entries, and more complex for sample data items) was taking longer than originally estimated. Based on these test results, we have implemented a two-pass processing system. In the first pass, we will capture the 100% data that is asked of everyone and some of which is necessary to provide the constitutionally mandated apportionment numbers to the President. In the second pass, we will capture the sample data from the long forms. This approach ensures that we will meet all processing deadlines and provides us with some staffing contingency. This decision has no impact on the schedule for the release of information for apportionment and redistricting and minimal impact on sample data.

During the four-site test, staff introduced and successfully tested the first pass of the two-pass software for the 100% data items. We are still developing the testing schedule for the second pass of the two-pass operation for those items asked of only a sample of the population.

- **Any difficulties confronting Local or Regional Census Offices.**

All local census offices and regional census offices are functioning and we are confident that the basic field infrastructure for Census 2000 is sound. Earlier I noted that there was a fire in one Chicago area office. That office is now in full operation. We are working closely with the General Services Administration to resolve problems in one of our New York City local census offices. We have corrected problems with the water supply and are working to correct problems with rodent infestation and a leaking sprinkler head. We have completed telephone installations and upgrades in all the local census offices. All offices have handled calls during the peak recruitment period without a major problem.

- **Preparation and issues concerning Internet response to Census 2000 short-form questionnaires and tabulation processes.**

Internet data collection and questionnaire assistance began on March 3. For the first time, the Census Bureau is providing questionnaire assistance over the Internet and the option of answering the short-form questionnaire via the Internet. The questionnaire assistance effort provides on-line help to respondents who need help in completing either a traditional paper questionnaire or the web-based Internet short form, as well as providing answers to other frequently asked questions about Census 2000. The Internet data collection option allows respondents to answer an English language version short-form questionnaire over a special, secure Internet website if they can provide

a valid housing unit identification number from their paper questionnaire. There is also an English language version of the Puerto Rico short form. Internet data collection will operate until April 15, 2000. The Internet questionnaire assistance operation will end the first week of June.

Two major issues that we had to deal with in designing our Internet data collection system were how to keep track of enumerations and how to ensure confidentiality. To keep track of enumerations, we are requiring that the respondent enter the identification number from the short form questionnaire they received in the mail before completing the questionnaire by Internet. This will allow us to keep track of the addresses on our Master Address File from which we have received a response and also help minimize the possibility of duplicate enumerations from those who both answer by Internet and mail back their paper form. In order to ensure confidentiality, we are using the appropriate encryption technology and firewalls to protect previously filed data.

Also, for the first time, the Census Bureau will provide Internet access to Census 2000 data through a newly developed system called the American FactFinder. Initial Census 2000 data will be available in early 2001. Data are available now in American FactFinder for the 1990 census, the 1997 Economic Census, the American Community Survey, and the Census 2000 Dress Rehearsal. Data users can use the American FactFinder to select the data they need for the geography of their choice from summary data products. Users will be able to search, browse, retrieve, view, print, save, and download data. Or they can create custom tabulations from microdata files, subject to strict confidentiality standards.

- **Status of and issues confronting Questionnaire Assistance Centers and "Be-Counted" questionnaire sites.**

Our partnership staff are working with community groups, business leaders, and local government officials to identify Be Counted sites appropriate to each community. Staff have confirmed over 15,000 sites. At these locations, which will operate from March 31 to April 11, people who believe they did not receive a census form, believe they were not included on a census questionnaire returned by their household, or who have no usual address on Census Day will be able to pick up a Be Counted questionnaire.

Regional staff have also identified over 27,000 questionnaire assistance centers. These centers, which will operate from today through mid-April, will provide assistance to individuals who might have difficulty completing the questionnaire because of language or other barriers. Be Counted forms will also be available at these sites.

Sites include, but are not limited to, community and civic centers, banks, libraries, schools, grocery stores, health centers, and places of worship. Census Bureau partnership specialists are working with local partners to publicize questionnaire assistance centers and Be Counted sites in their area. The Census Bureau has developed posters in six languages to identify questionnaire assistance center sites and publicize site locations throughout the community. Posters have also been produced that identify Be Counted locations and advise people of the availability of census forms at these sites.

In addition, we are encouraging partners to publicize the sites in local papers, flyers, community meetings, religious bulletins, and radio and television news programs.

The Census Bureau has selected and trained paid clerks and is seeking additional volunteers to provide assistance at the questionnaire assistance centers. Paid clerks were selected based on their ability to provide appropriate language or literacy assistance in communities that need this type of support. All individuals providing assistance at questionnaire assistance centers--whether paid or volunteer--have been sworn to protect the confidentiality of individual information on the questionnaires. It has been a challenge to attract a sufficient number of volunteers, but with the help of our partners and the Corporation for National Service, we have adequate staff to operate the centers.

The Census Bureau is selecting and training staff to serve as Be Counted clerks in the local census offices. These clerks will conduct advance visits to all sites to ensure their suitability, set up the sites, resupply forms as necessary, and close down the sites at the end of the operation. Unlike questionnaire assistance centers, the Be Counted sites are not staffed. They simply are places where people can pick up a form to complete and mail back.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, I repeat that at this point, 24 days from Census Day, I am aware of no serious problems that would put the census at risk. The next month is crucial. I cannot promise you that serious problems will not develop, but I will inform you and Mrs. Maloney if they do.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my testimony and I will now answer any questions.

Mr. MILLER. We are going to recess around 2.

Your statement just outlines how complex and huge an undertaking the decennial census is. It is impressive that you and the people at the Census Bureau are able to pull it all together as we get close to the official census date.

But to begin with, I mentioned in my opening statement this question of access. This has been a concern and problem from day 1, since I got involved over 2 years ago, with the formation of this committee, and we have talked about it. I brought it up last week in Appropriations with Secretary Daily.

As we begin to approach some very critical parts of the whole census over these next several months, I think we need to make sure we have complete access to the information that is needed to do what is lawfully required of our oversight responsibilities. We are talking about $7 billion of taxpayers' money and something that obviously has a major impact on this whole country for the next decade.

I come from the private sector. I was never in government before, and I used this analogy sometimes of being the auditor. I see these reports coming out of here on guidelines that the Bureau is giving us, and to me, if I was a private auditor and doing this in the private sector, I would quit the job. It would not be even acceptable. It would be totally unacceptable under any CPA guidelines.

I think it is almost arrogant the way this is written, because it is telling us and the other oversight agencies of government, which include the Inspector General—and I haven't really talked directly with the Inspector General Office, the Census Monitoring Board, the General Accounting Office—what we can and can't do. And I thought we were the elected Representatives of government.

I know you are appointed by the President, but we do have legal responsibility for oversight; and we also, because of the $7 billion, have a responsibility to see that. The Monitoring Board was created in cooperation with the President to have the responsibility, and as you know, we are talking about maybe 40 some people, total, in all four agencies that are going to be involved in the census issue. And we are talking about 520 offices and hundreds of thousands of employees at the Bureau.

So I am concerned about the access. I am concerned about the delaying tactics that have been used over the past year or so—and I know there are Commerce Department political operatives that kind of hold things up. We always get different excuses. This can't continue, and when we get into the critical time in the summer, it is going to be important that we have access.

Let me give you one illustration. One of things that people talk about, and I don't believe this is true, but I am saying this comes out, is that there is going to be an interest in not being successful with the full enumeration so we have to use adjustment. I think you are too professional and so is the Bureau, but there are those that say they are going to not do a very good job in the enumeration so we have to do an adjusted census. And the problem is, when you get to closeout, I think it was 16 weeks in 1990, you are going to do it in 10 weeks and you will have an extra 10 million people to do it. You can close out in 10 weeks, just the quality of data may be not that good; you might or might not know that.

The question is, with our oversight responsibility, we want to make sure, for example, that when we do a closeout, it is done right. If we have to give 2 weeks' notice in every case because you require it, how can we do the oversight? Should we just, say, trust you with $7 billion?

I am concerned. The General Accounting Office has spoken to me about it. The person, in fact, who was going to be testifying next week will raise the question. He has never had this type of experience in his 17 years in the General Accounting Office. So I think we need to have it clarified, what we can and can't do. We certainly don't want to interfere with what is operating.

But some of these—for example, you have to have a regional director or an assistant regional Census manager accompanying anybody that shows up at an office? You are going to waste everybody's valuable time when somebody wants to stop in to see you.

I think you have created a bureaucratic mess with these rules and regulations. I think you should be open. If you want to be transparent, you need to make it available. Sometimes it takes us weeks to get information. So we are going to have a hearing on it in a couple of weeks.

I would also like to recommend that you or someone senior in the decennial census have a meeting with all four agencies involved, which would include the Monitoring Board, the Inspector General, and GAO to make sure that we all understand and can work this out.

And now you may please respond.

Mr. PREWITT. Thank you.

The closeout process for the moment, I would like to address those. But I will not make those direct. Let's talk first about the——

Mr. MILLER. I am just using that as an illustration.

Mr. PREWITT. Let us talk first about it. I am only going to mention that because some of the facts you used about 1990 were not exactly correct. I would like to make the record right, but I would like to address the access issue as best I can in a few moments. Since I became Director in late October, there have been approximately 10—depending on how you count, 10 or so major GAO reports. And I happen to have most of them here with me, and in not a single one of those reports, Chairman Miller, is there any expression of concern about the cooperation of the Census Bureau.

It has never been put in a report. Indeed, based on my experiences, perhaps, the most intense and detailed investigation of the Census Bureau in its history was in August of last year, when we were in the middle of trying to put our operations together—as you know, I had to write you about it. I was so concerned about the amount of time it was taking of our senior management. If the GAO investigation continued at that level, it could indeed put the census at risk.

But speaking of cooperation, let me read you a sentence from that report.

We provided a draft of this report to the Department of Commerce for comment. As requested, the Director of the Bureau of the Census provided written comments on behalf of the Department in 2 days. This was a thick report. We appreciate the Bureau's rapid response to the draft and its overall cooperation and timely response to our data requests.

In this entire stack of reports, that is the only place at which the GAO addressed the issue of cooperativeness with its agencies and investigations. And it was a completely positive statement, not a negative statement. Yet now we are told by the same agency that we have an unusually poor record of cooperation.

Let me say one other thing about this report. They focus on preparations, as they should have, in the period leading up to the census; not a single one of them alerts us to an area in which, in fact, we are ill prepared, that is, how to simultaneously do a census and explain what we are doing in real-time to our oversight agencies.

We have a huge number of requests for site visits in the next 3 weeks. The Monitoring Board is only one of them. The GAO reports have never said to us over the last 2 years, "Look, you better put in some extra staff just to deal with the oversight apparatus."

So if their intent was to help us prepare for the census, the one thing they did not help us prepare for and didn't even ever address was the question of how can you staff up in the middle of a census for all of the oversight apparatus that is going to come your way? I would have loved it if they would have given us some kind of an advance warning on this.

Let us not talk just about the past. I would like to tell you what GAO has asked for and what we are providing.

GAO has asked for our cost and progress system, which reports on 55 operations at every level of geography and operations. This includes, for example, the number of persons recruited, the number of persons hired for each operation by their preemployment status—employed, retired, including target recruitment pools, such as Welfare to Work beneficiaries, persons under special waivers for noncitizens, Federal assistance annuitants, current Federal employees, recipients of public housing assistance and any other waivers that may become available to the Bureau, the number of employees quitting, resigning, terminated, involuntarily separated, et cetera, actual staff turnover rates, number of applicants in various stages of hiring, and so forth. That is just under labor force participation.

Then in our production system, this cost and progress data includes total case load assumptions for each and every questionnaire delivery operation, that is, update/leave, list/enumerate, update/enumerate, urban update/leave, et cetera, number of possible mailback responses for all questionnaire deliveries, separate accounts for the number of mailout undeliverables, initial total case load for nonresponse followup, subsequent estimate of total NRFU—nonresponse followup—case load, incorporating late mailback responses, number of hours worked, training hours, overtime hours, total earnings, number of employees receiving——

Mr. MILLER. Excuse me. There is no question there are lots of requests. You don't need to read every single item, we don't have time. I understand.

Mr. PREWITT. I mean, I just started with this one.

Mr. MILLER. You are welcome to do that, but I will tell you, then we don't have—should you decide what oversight we should have?

Mr. PREWITT. No, sir. I will turn to that question. I would like to answer that question.

The data that they have requested, and that we are providing we are providing in real-time, is a terabyte of information, a terabyte. It is hard to know what a terabyte is if you can't visualize it. It is the equivalent of 16,000 CD-ROMs, or if the imagination is still focused on a paper record, this is the Yellow Pages of the Washington, DC. A terabyte is not 50 of these or 500 of these or 5 million of these, a terabyte is 50 million of these. That is how much information we are giving to GAO.

Now, if providing in real-time the equivalent of 50 million phone books, or 16,000 CD-ROMs, is being uncooperative, I would hate to think what the more cooperative agencies are providing to the GAO.

But now let me address your straight question, whose job is it to decide what oversight is? It is not mine. It is certainly yours; it is the U.S. Congress'. I appreciate that. Obviously, the Congress needs this information to discharge its oversight responsibilities, that is, the terabyte of information in real-time over the next 10 weeks.

But I have to pose the question to you, do you need it in real-time on the assumption that somehow the census can actually be managed on a daily basis by the U.S. Congress? For example, in your opening comment——

Mr. MILLER. I am well past my 5 minutes. I have gone over 10 minutes.

Mr. PREWITT. With permission, I said you addressed this at some length——

Mr. MILLER. Right, right.

Mr. PREWITT [continuing]. In your opening comment. You addressed the error on the address letter. Now, do you want to know about that in real-time in order to fix it? Because it can't happen that way. You can't fix problems with a GAO process. You can't manage the census that way.

You can exercise oversight. You can exercise whether we have committed fraud or inefficiencies or corruption, mismanagement of funds. But it is very hard for me to imagine why you need a terabyte of information in real-time. We are providing it, at some extra costs to us, to get it all to you on time and to the GAO.

Mr. MILLER. Our responsibility is concerning fraud. I mean——

Mr. PREWITT. No, no. I am just saying that if the GAO's task is to see if we have appropriately spent the taxpayer dollars, they will be able to do that, because all of this information is available. You know, Mr. Chairman, you said very wisely—I thought very wisely, as a matter of fact—some time ago that perhaps the job that I now hold is the job for a general. And I took it seriously; I seriously did. And I often reflected on that comment and asked myself, what would General Schwarzkopf do under these circumstances? If the GAO were to do a real-time audit of Desert Storm, to what purpose would that have been done?

Let us say there was an auditor of an armed vehicle being positioned on the Iraqi/Kuwait border, and the GAO auditor/judge or the operator of that vehicle did not make a competent reading of the GPS data; and so the auditor then said to this operator, "Look, I don't think you are putting this vehicle in the right place."

The operator knows it is in the right place because he understands the larger strategy that is going on. He now has the following choice, he has to stop and explain.

Mr. MILLER. That is a crazy analogy you are using, to say that we are—you know, it is like going to—I will tell you what, we are using an awful lot of time. We just have a problem here.

If it is real or perceived, it is a problem. If you want a transparent census, we need to feel that the people who have oversight responsibility, all four agencies of the government, have access. That is all we are asking, and so——

Mr. PREWITT. Sir, a terabyte of information strikes me as a lot of transparency.

Mr. MILLER. I am telling you, a lot of people are complaining to me, and I am listening to the complaints from all the agencies. I haven't talked to the Inspector General, but the other ones, they are saying there is a problem. We are going to have this hearing. I hope you will meet with everybody and see if there is a better way to open up, because we are going to go through some critical times these next months if we are going to be obstructing and delaying—I mean, what the GAO is saying; you know, you have information, and then it takes weeks to still get it.

Why are we—and I think it is just billed unnecessarily—your staffs have built unnecessary barriers here; and it ultimately goes down to the Commerce Department, it sounds like, and then the politicians get involved. Anyway, we just need to avoid this problem.

I will guarantee you—and Mrs. Maloney will come up and defend you here in a minute. I will tell you Mr. Waxman and Mr. Dingell would not have tolerated one bit of this when they were chairmen.

Mr. PREWITT. We have to understand what 50 million phone books full of data means if that is not—in real-time, if that is not transparency, it is hard for me to imagine what is transparency.

You, for example, quoted the fact that the Monitoring Board says that we have 30 outstanding requests. That is not our understanding. We have two outstanding requests. We get requests from the Monitoring Board on a constant-flow basis. There is always some outstanding by definition. I don't know where that 30 comes from.

Mr. MILLER. Actually, we will submit this for the record. This is something that they gave me. These are not the only outstanding ones. These are all the delays it takes to get information, and it varies—refused data requests and such. We have a problem. And are you denying there is a problem? I am just telling you, this is going to affect the respect for the census when we get through this process; and unless we feel we have access to this information, everyone is going to be suspect of it.

And I really—this really upset me when I read this document, the arrogance of it, to say we cannot ever, unless we have 2 weeks' notice; I have never had any agency tell Congress—I mean, this is only my 8th year, and I don't do much oversight, but I never had anyone tell me that I have to give 2 weeks. There isn't reason why you shouldn't. We should try in every effort. But here it says it is absolutely that way.

Mr. PREWITT. Yes.

Mr. MILLER. I just——

Mr. PREWITT. I apologize if the language was arrogant. My recollection of that letter is that we sent it as early as we could to try to create some sort of systematic way to accommodate all of the requests that we are getting for site visits, which is a large number of requests. The GAO—the Monitoring Board letter in the next 20 days has, as we know——

Mr. MILLER. You are going to have to fly in a regional director to every one of those 1-hour visits, I guess; that is what your policy is. That is a waste of your time and effort, it sounds to me. That is what you are saying: You will either have the regional director or the assistant regional Census manager accompanying. It is all of these people. They are 1-hour visits. That is a waste of your efficiency, I think.

Mr. PREWITT. We don't know what the visits are. We know that in the past the people who have been asking us for visits, we have had to stop the operation. We have had to set up training systems. We have to do things, sir. We are actually doing the census now. We are actually in the middle of it. As I just said——

Mr. MILLER. We have gone a little bit longer. I apologize for the time.

Let me just ask you. We are going to have other people besides these agencies testifying and find out more background on this and what the legal requirements are so we have it clarified. But will you arrange for a meeting with the four different agencies involved, so they are all in the room together—maybe you have done this—and see if we can get it cleared up so that everybody feels that this is going to be a transparent census?

You want a transparent census, I want a transparent census; and let us see if we can get a better working relationship.

Mr. PREWITT. I would be absolutely delighted. I requested that meeting. I requested that meeting some time ago from both chairmen of the Monitoring Board. I never got an answer to that letter. I wrote you a letter in August, saying I was worried about this situation, and asked for a meeting. I did not get a response to that letter. So we very much would welcome that meeting.

Mr. MILLER. Let us jointly write a letter to them all——

Mr. PREWITT. Good, good.

Mr. MILLER [continuing]. And say, let us have this meeting. I mean, the minority and majority sides should be involved. Both sides on the Monitoring Board should be involved, because this perception is going to get more of a problem. It may not be that real, but I think it is a real perception.

Mrs. Maloney, I apologize for taking so much time.

Mrs. MALONEY. It seems to me that as the Director is designing and implementing the most difficult part of the census, he is not being criticized for the task of running an appropriate and thorough census; he is being criticized for not answering all of the questions about the job that everybody seems to say he is doing all right and doing well.

And I just would like your cutoff, and I would like to hear more about all of these requests that you are getting to answer questions. Just to mention some that I am aware of, because I read the reports—the GAO, very thoroughly questioning; the Monitoring Board, they want 31 visits, what, in 2 weeks, 31 visits.

We weren't notified, but 31 visits they want, this subcommittee—I see him regularly, every week at least at a subcommittee meeting, it seems like—the National Academy of Sciences and all of their committees, and the advisory committees that you have set up, certainly the IGs from the Commerce Department to name a few.

But you were cutoff when you were going through all of these requests. And I would like to hear all of these requests that you are getting to provide information on your job. Sometimes, do you think, possibly they are trying to obstruct your ability to do your job by demanding you to spend the majority of your time answering questions about your job?

And I would like to ask about reinventing government. I know that the Vice President—and I supported his efforts—went out with a very aggressive campaign to cut back on the number of people in government. We now have the smallest government we have ever had, and possibly we might look at a new form of structuring your office where you have a whole unit that does nothing but answer questions.

Now, I must tell you some people think the census is you go out and print a form at a Xerox place. You and I know, Dan, this is highly complicated; I spend a lot of my time answering questions to my colleagues in Congress. The census is an important system. It is an important goal, and it is complicated.

So I would really like you to put in the record and go through everybody who is requesting all of this information. And I would also like a report from you—I don't want to ask for more paperwork, but I would like an estimate of how much of your time and your major senior staff time has to go in to answering questions.

We know many people work for the Census Bureau, Dan, but only people in supervisory positions can answer some of these questions, and so I would like a sense of how much of their time—and is this constant demand for information impeding their ability to get—as you said, as Dan said, we all say—the most comprehensive, largest peacetime effort and mobilization ever in our country, the greatest civic responsibility of every citizen to be involved.

And I know that I see the outreach in my own community with the Census bus and forms and everything else and my own mail that came to me over the weekend. And I did an informal survey, all of my staff and a lot of my friends got the form, so it seems like the operations are moving forward. People aren't criticizing the operations moving forward, but what we appear to hear is a complaint that so many different entities are asking questions, they aren't getting all of their detailed questions answered, some of which may be repetitive and some of which may impede the ability to do their job.

If all I had to do—if I had to respond every day to the GAO, Monitoring Board, IGs, and not to mention every politician, including myself, and yourself, who are constantly asking questions, we couldn't get our job done.

So I would like to hear in the record how many different groups are asking for information, how much information it is, do you have the staff to respond to all of these questions. And I would just like to give you as much time as you need to explain what all of

these requests are doing to your time and your ability to oversee a very important function of the Federal Government.

Mr. PREWITT. Yes, Congresswoman Maloney. If you will permit me, I will start with an anecdote that came to mind as I was listening to Chairman Miller's opening comment. Norman Bourlaug, who got a Nobel Prize—he was an agronomist who was based at a research station in Mexico during the Green Revolution; Norman Bourlaug was a very, very important scientist with respect to corn breeding. And the headquarters used to send him requests all the time for information; and Norman Bourlaug finally got frustrated and cabled back—that was in the day of cables, in the 1950's—"Did you send me down here to grow paper or to grow corn?"

I sometimes feel as if I had been sent to the Census Bureau to produce reports, not to produce a census. And I am very anxious about that, because we are in the middle of it now, and I want to produce a census for this country, not just produce endless reports and site visits.

Now, that is not an attack on oversight responsibilities. That is simply a question of, is the oversight process supposed to do real-time auditing and, if so, is that because the oversight process can somehow manage the census?

By the time the auditors finish the work, come back, write a report, give it to us for comments, we then comment, and it comes down here. And then you have a hearing to tell me that we should have done something differently in our recruitment system, it is too late. We have already fixed that problem. If we didn't fix it, we were in trouble. We are fixing problems all day long, every day.

One of the problems you asked about is how much time. I would estimate that in terms of our senior management time when we get together to talk two or three times a week about where we are, what the issues are, half of our time—and this is sort of 9 or 10 people—half of our time is spent in conversations about how to be responsive to the GAO, the IG, the subcommittee, the National Academy, the advisory committees—at least half of our time is spent on those issues. That is a lot when you are actually doing a census.

Regarding your offer to put into the record the actual documentation of the requests, let me assemble that systematically, and I will provide that for the record.

Mrs. MALONEY. Would you like to elaborate on all of the requests that come into your office? I would just like to hear about it. What is your day like? Do you go in there, you go to work and you get a call that you need another report done?

I would like you to elaborate on all of these requests that are coming in.

Mr. PREWITT. Surely.

I would say about a third of the day, a normal day—there is no such thing as a normal day when you are actually doing the census, about a third of the day are these brushfire problems. For example, there are large numbers of Members of the U.S. Congress who are concerned about whether they have enough of something—enough offices, enough advertising, enough recruitment, enough jobs, enough something in their districts. So the phone bank and the letters will be coming in from Members of Congress, and that

is quite separate from official oversight. That is one-on-one stuff. It is very time-consuming, very time-consuming.

We tried to be very responsive to Congressman Ryan on one issue that was in terms of senior personnel time, including myself, other senior people, regional directors; I would say the total man-hours that went into that letter could easily have been 40, 50 hours. That was one constituent asking one question, which turned out to be misframed; he wrote: "I lost 6 weeks of salary." It turns out 6 weeks ago, he lost 1 week of salary, which was made up the next week.

We get those all the time. We have to do as best we can and respond to them. So let us say that is about a third of the day, brush fires, not just congressional, all the other brush fires, they are going out all over the country all the time, all of these small things that come and go.

Then I would say about a third of the day is spent with the official oversight process, one way or the other, either getting materials ready for a hearing, getting materials ready for a report, having conversations about what we ought to be doing and not be doing, how do we handle—for example, let me give you an example we just dealt with yesterday.

There are requests for the—all of the complete count committees. There are about 9,000 complete count committees. The complete count committees are not ours. They are established by local mayors and local Governors. They are not Census Bureau complete count committees.

By what authority do I share the list, with the contact name, of these 9,000 committees to somebody who just asked me? I don't know what the mailing is going to be to those people. They didn't join up to be visited by the GAO or the IG; they joined up to try to do a census. Nevertheless, we spent 1½ hours struggling with that issue just yesterday.

So there is about a third of the day that goes into that kind of problem. And then I would think about a third of the day actually goes into trying to manage the census, trying to deal with the local Census offices that don't have—their recruitment is below target. What are we going to do in those offices? Do we move people and so forth.

So I would say that on a normal day close to a third of our time is spent with the oversight apparatus, and it comes from a large number of sources; and that is different from individual congressional requests, because I don't think we put that in the same category. These are just questions that are being raised by Members of Congress, and by mayors; I put that in there too.

The exciting thing about this census, and it is really very exciting—I am very pleased to be here, quite honestly—a lot of people think they own this census, a lot of people, thousands of people, our partners, our mayors, our Governors, Members of Congress, all think that they now sort of own this census. That is very healthy for the society.

We are very excited to be running that kind of census. When you share ownership, it creates lots of pressures on you. So that is what it is. I will be happy to provide that more systematically.

Mr. MILLER. We can do a couple of rounds. Let me recognize Mr. Ryan. We will come back and do a couple of rounds, if that is all right.

Mr. Ryan.

Mr. RYAN. Actually, I was coming prepared to defend you today, till I heard that one. Let me——

Mr. PREWITT. You are an honest man, Mr. Ryan. That won't deter you at all.

Mr. RYAN. Let's clarify what happened in Racine, WI.

When a senior management person at your local Census office in my district of Racine, WI, tells me that many employees aren't getting their paychecks, and he sends me a letter to that effect, and he is an official of the Census Bureau, I think that is a very serious claim, and—I think that is a very serious thing. I'm sorry it took you 50 man-hours to figure that out. I don't know how long it takes you to figure those things out, but that was a very legitimate question.

Mr. PREWITT. Surely. We took it legitimately.

Mr. RYAN. I would like to use a military anecdote if I may for a second.

I had the pleasure and opportunity to have breakfast with Colin Powell not too long ago, with a handful of other Members of Congress, and he laid out for us what he calls the "Powell doctrine." The Powell doctrine, basically the lessons we learned from the Vietnam War, is that politicians were running the war, picking the bombing targets, and we had the whole policy of incrementalism—the wrong way to do that.

What we learned in the Gulf war under the Powell doctrine was, let the experts do it, let the experts run the war, let the military experts who know how to do their jobs do those jobs.

I think that is an appropriate anecdote for this situation. And I really sympathize with what you are doing, and I think you are the right person for the job.

But also we are all concerned about the census. Everybody believes we have ownership in the census. This is the greatest nonmilitary civic exercise we ever engage in here, so oversight is critical; oversight is very important, and it is a congressional responsibility to have oversight.

When we are told by members of the Census Bureau that paychecks aren't getting mailed out, whether that is true or not, we have to react and do oversight on those things, because it is just around the corner. When we have calls and we are finding out that we don't have enough people—in Wisconsin, we have a very tight labor market; we need more people to fill out the applications so that we can get the enumerators out there when that happens. We are concerned about that. I have been on TV for 3 weeks at home telling people, "Call, call, call, call, please, we need applications."

Which leads me to my question, I have here the letter I got in the mail about the census. And it is a letter from you saying we need help hiring temporary workers throughout the United States to help complete the census, call the local Census office near you for more information, the phone number is available from the directory assistance or on the Internet, and then it lists your website.

I just wanted to ask you—and the complaint I have been getting is; I am sure you have thought this through—I want to see, why didn't you just put your 800 number in there instead of asking people to dial up and pay 75 cents for directory assistance.

I have been given your 800 number, I don't know it by heart, I thought I did, but I have been giving your 800 number all over the place. Why didn't you just throw the 800 number there, which is a national number? It doesn't matter where you are, you can call it, and then they route you to your local Census office so you can get the information on how you fill out that application.

That extra expense and extra required action, I am fearful is going to delay people or just stop people from actually inquiring.

Mr. PREWITT. No. Congressman Ryan, that is a completely legitimate question. And I didn't—by the way, if I can return to the first part, I thought your question was legitimate; that is why we took it so seriously. But sometimes those questions actually are stimulated by a pretty little thing. The way it got to you, it made it sound like a much bigger problem than it turned out to be. We both found out that.

I don't think the question was inappropriate. I was simply using that as a way to suggest the day is full of those kinds of things, which, when we look hard at them, they turn out not to amount to quite as much as what it appears.

Mr. RYAN. It is just a helpful suggestion, maybe you don't need to have a manager for all of these site visits. I just actually popped into the local Census office and just walked around and talked to people, asked them how things were going.

When you responded to my question about this particular instance, you sent four people from your Chicago office to drive up—to take half a day to meet me in my Racine office, when all you could have done is just given me a call and said, "Here is what has happened; it has been taken care of." That took 4 of your manhours for your regional people driving up from Chicago to Racine, WI, to explain that everything is OK.

It was a nice meeting, but I thought it was kind of a waste of time. So I hope you can consider—maybe you can do this in a little faster, timely manner.

Mr. PREWITT. We do take requests from members of the subcommittee very seriously.

To your other question, I think it is a fair question, the phone number question. Before you got in the room, I did mention that after the advance letter went out, we were getting on that website, we were getting about 1,000—100,000 hits a week—excuse me, 100,000 hits a day, and it jumped to 1 million the next day. So it really has worked.

I honestly do not have a good explanation for your question. Did we have the number at that time? I think we simply didn't have the number when that letter was being——

Mr. RYAN. The 800 number?

Mr. PREWITT. Right. We have now got that number everywhere where we can have it; it is 1–888–325–7733. If everyone is listening and they want a census job, that is the number, 1–888–325–7733.

I think we simply did not have it. We did not want to route them directly to local offices, because you can't do that in a letter very

well because this is a mass mailing. I think that is the simple explanation.

Mr. RYAN. When you went to print, you didn't have the 800 number?

Mr. PREWITT. That is correct.

[The information referred to follows:]

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, DC 20233-0001
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

MAR 20 2000

The Honorable Dan Miller
Chairman, Subcommittee on the Census
Committee on Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-6143

Dear Mr. Chairman:

During the March 8, 2000, hearing before the Subcommittee on the Census, Representative Ryan asked me why the U.S. Census Bureau did not put the 1-800 number set up for Census 2000 employment on the advance notification letter.

Based on the best information I had at the time, I testified that the reason the toll-free recruiting number was not put in the letter was because it was not available at the time the letters were printed. Upon researching the matter, I found this to be incorrect.

Discussions with my staff subsequent to the hearing have indicated that the Census Bureau made the decision not to include the 1-800 number after conferring with consultants in the telecommunications industry and reviewing our experiences in past censuses. The overriding concern was that if the 1-800 number were included in a mailing of this magnitude, the Census Bureau's system for handling incoming calls might be overwhelmed by inquiries regarding a variety of issues. This situation might prevent applicants in search of Census 2000 jobs from getting through on that line. For this reason, Census Bureau officials determined that it was better to use the 1-800 number in other recruiting activities, but not to include it in the advance notification letter. At that point, the decision was made to refer applicants to the Census 2000 web site and to have them call their local census office. In fact, since the Census 2000 advance letter mailing, the jobs web site has been accessed over three million times.

I apologize if I created any confusion with my reply. Should you have any questions, please have a member of your staff contact Ms. Robin Bachman, Chief of the Congressional Affairs Office, at (301) 457-2171.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Prewitt

Kenneth Prewitt
Director

cc: The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
The Honorable Paul D. Ryan

Mr. RYAN. OK. I think we have a vote, so I will just yield back my time.

Mr. MILLER. OK. We will take a recess. We have three votes. I am guessing we will be back in 20 minutes or so. We will stand in recess.

[Recess.]

Mr. MILLER. We will have the committee reconvene.

Mrs. Maloney is on her way back, but rather than taking up time, let us go ahead and continue. I have some more questions.

Also in our audience here today is Dr. Barbara Bryant, one of your predecessors, who was sitting in the exact seat exactly 10 years ago. That was before my time involved in Congress.

So we are glad you could come as an observer. She has testified as a witness before, since we had the subcommittee recreated.

Let me switch over to the subject of the prenotification letter which we talked about and get some more clarification. There are two problems with—the single-digit problem. And the other problem—and we are get getting calls into office—is this issue about—I think there was in an article in the Washington Post that said they wish you had put in an extra sentence in English on the bottom of the letter. My neighbor next door back in Bradenton called me before I flew back up here yesterday, "What is this about?" People are confused about the envelope.

So, again, I don't think it is going to affect the end result. But it is just a perception problem again.

Before you came on board, we had a debate on the issue of the second mailing, which—I mean, that was a decision before your arrival here that was tested in the dress rehearsal. It showed, I think, a 7 to 15 percent increase in response. But the decision was made. We had expressed our opinion that it should go through the second mailing, because this prenotification was going to solve the problem.

Was that ever pretested, the prenotification, as comparable to the second questionnaire? Do you know?

Mr. PREWITT. As follows, Mr. Miller——

Mr. MILLER. What kind of response are you expecting the prenotification will help?

Mr. PREWITT. Exactly. The prenotification letter was pretested back in the early 1990's as part of the package; that is, the so-called three mailing package; that is, the prenotification letter, then the form and then the postcard followup.

And based upon those tests, we estimated that response rate could be affected by as much as 6 percent. Most of that, it turns out, is attributable to the postcard reminder. You get the biggest bump from that.

The questionnaire bump has to do with the fact that it is more user friendly. There is obviously going to be a questionnaire, irrespective, but making a more user-friendly questionnaire, we thought would increase it. So the prenotification letter, it was our estimate that it would increase by perhaps as much as 2 percent, somewhere between 1½ and 2 percent response rate.

Mr. MILLER. That was for the prenotification letter 1½ to 2 percent?

Mr. PREWITT. Yes.

Mr. MILLER. How about the post-questionnaire card, as a postcard?

Mr. PREWITT. The postcard, which is basically a thank-you reminder, we estimated could be as high as 3 percent. So the total package was a 6 percent bump in response rate. Indeed, at that time we were estimating the response rate to be about 55 percent based upon our modeling of the demography and other response rates. And it was that combination of three things, a) notification letter, b) a user-friendly questionnaire, and c) a reminder postcard, that moved us from 55 to 61 percent.

Mr. MILLER. This single-digit problem, it doesn't sound too big because it is a single digit, except for 120 times. The problem is really a quality check problem, I think. How did this stage—can you explain how the quality check did not work and what other quality checks are in place to make sure this doesn't happen again?

Mr. PREWITT. Yes, sir.

The quality check process worked right. The flaw was the specification in the quality process.

Here is what happened: We ran our test deck on the advance letter. And it tested out exactly correctly; that is, all features of the test letter tested out, including the address and so forth. Sometime between that test deck and the production run, we were still negotiating about some of the language text.

We were in very active conversation with our advisory committee with respect to language. And under their urging, we made some modifications in the language. What that meant is, you opened up the software. Now the software that got opened up was simply the text file software, not the address software, so we presumed. And so, after the software was closed and the production run started, we then focused upon those things which we thought might have changed, i.e., if there was any problem in the language translation.

The other thing we focused on, we actually do approximately 200 cases every 4 hours of all of our production runs, and we pull those cases out, batches of them, send them to Jeffersonville, and they run through separate quality control processes.

The quality control processes in Jeffersonville were focused exclusively on the parts of the address which were operational. We were very concerned that the bar code matched front and back, and that the bar code that we had matched the address that the Post Office had as its mailing address. All of those things tested out perfectly.

And the mistake in our quality check is that there simply wasn't a provision in the quality check to go back and look at something which was not operational, except for the language part. We went back and relooked at all the language part to make sure it was all right.

And it was simply—it wasn't a failure of the quality control. It was a failure of the prespecification, not to respect that particular data field.

Mr. MILLER. But it was basically a failure in designing the quality check then?

Mr. PREWITT. In that sense, yes, sir.

Mr. MILLER. Right. Because there should have been another quality check that caught that.

Mr. PREWITT. Of that field.

Mr. MILLER. That is where the problem——

Mr. PREWITT. It was a specification rather than a failure of the process itself. The process worked the way it was specified.

Mr. MILLER. The specifications were wrong.

Mrs. Maloney, we went ahead and started, knowing you were right on your way.

On this same issue, let me go over my time and we will even it out here, this question of not putting a sentence at the end of the letter saying in English what this was on the back side, because people didn't know what the envelope was about unless you could read any of those five languages and such. It was a question of confusion.

I think the Washington Post said the Bureau wishes—admits they should have done that.

Mr. PREWITT. Yes, sir.

Mr. MILLER. Go ahead. That was maybe a quality check or focus group; why couldn't we have caught that, I wonder.

Mr. PREWITT. That I would ascribe to a judgment error more than a processing or a quality check error. And I can explain it, but I don't intend to try to excuse it.

But the explanation is, quite honestly, that this is the first operation that we have put into the census in 2000, which was not pretested. And the reason for that is, after the dress rehearsal, when we realized we could not do a targeted mailing to different language groups, we converted the advance letter from simply a prenotification letter to carry the second burden of also being the mechanism by which you got the language form. So it took on a second task.

And our attention on making sure it worked well for that task was so intense and focused that, quite honestly, we lost sight of the fact that it had a different task, which is the 80 percent of the American population that doesn't speak one of these five languages, or the 90 percent or whatever.

So we were extremely focused upon the language dimension of that letter, and so that is why I say it was a judgment error. The letter was printed exactly the way we spec'd out. There is no problem in the letter itself.

In retrospect, it certainly should have included a sentence which said the envelope is for the people who want a language form. The concern at that time—these letters are examined and talked about and argued in focus groups and so forth, and the concern at that time was, let us keep this letter as—again, as clean as possible with respect to its task. And I think if we had pretested it, we would have gotten some of the response that we have now gotten with respect to the confusion, and we would have then changed it.

But it was an operation that because of when it happened—it happened after the dress rehearsal, and there simply was no time to pretest it. I learned from that—and we had this conversation last summer when we were talking about additional operations. I learned from that that we simply should not put something in unless it is absolutely mandatory because the census is at risk. We should not put in operations which we have been unable to field test because that is the way mistakes get made in a process like this.

It was an error in judgment, not in process. It is again regrettable. I think the only sort of saving grace or—not saving grace, but the thing I would mention—we are trying to track as best we can the kind of current attitudes of the public with respect to the census. And we ran a survey, or some partners on behalf of the Census Bureau ran a survey, over the weekend just as the letter was coming out. The level of awareness is very high, 89 percent of the American public is saying they are aware of the census, and that is unprecedented at this stage in the census.

Eighty-four percent can actually describe some of the features of a census. It is not only just general awareness, it is very, very high. And when you ask the people, are they going to cooperate, those numbers are very, very high. That doesn't mean it will happen, but at least it is very encouraging.

We have reason to believe—look, I make no excuse. I don't want to sound like I am. On the other hand, the number of calls that we have gotten and e-mail is well, well under a percent. Almost any mass mailing generates at least 1 percent of people that don't like it for one reason or another. So we don't yet see this as serious.

Mr. MILLER. Do you log in—we are getting calls in the office. It is not large numbers, but other Members are calling us about it.

Mr. PREWITT. Surely.

Mr. MILLER. But do you log in the numbers throughout all the——

Mr. PREWITT. Yes, certainly.

Mr. MILLER. How much——

Mr. PREWITT. I have only logged in central headquarters. Central headquarters in Suitland. I haven't logged in—they are certainly occurring in the region as well. But I would say as of last night when I checked on this, the central headquarters was easily 200 e-mails and phone calls. So it could easily get to a million. It could easily get to a percent.

Whether that will affect the census or not, it is hard to say. The forms are on their way. Look, some of the forms are already——

Mr. MILLER. It is more of a public relations issue, it is a second public relations issue on the first big thing. But the advertising has gone—so that is really the earliest public communication issue.

Mr. PREWITT. And all the partnership work, well over half a million people have already participated in one of the road tour events.

We have had a series of meetings with ministers lately. The Census Sabbath idea is really catching. We think it will be really big. It is a public relations embarrassment. I regret it, again, as I did the digit problem.

But if I really believed that it was going to threaten the census, I would be doing something, and I simply don't think it is.

Mr. MILLER. All right.

Mrs. Maloney.

Mrs. MALONEY. Dr. Prewitt, could you—what would you recommend to respond to, really, the chairman's concern that he is raising over wanting more oversight and more transparent oversight? What would you recommend could be done that is not going to interfere with the professionals doing their job, but would address his concerns?

Mr. PREWITT. Well, I would like to say, both as a citizen, as a political scientist, and now as a member of the executive branch, I believe very strongly in the oversight responsibilities of the U.S. Congress. I have no hesitancy about that.

And I do think if you go back through the GAO reports, if you go back through your own committee requests, if you even go back looking at site requests, from subcommittee staff, from Monitoring Board, to my knowledge, not a single request has not in one way or the other been acceded to and responded to.

Site visits all took place all through the summer, successfully. Many of them took a full day, they weren't 1-hour visits. They took a full day. We accommodated all of them. We have accommodated the Monitoring Board fully thus far.

So it is not any kind of a resistance to either site visits or information flows or what have you. I think the concern I have right now is the real-time nature of it, which is that they need a lot of stuff right now, and right now is also when we are doing the census.

And so I think my advice to Mr. Miller would be, indeed, the advice he gave to me, which was in effect, I believe, it would be very effective to have the four key agencies, the subcommittee, the GAO, the IG and—all of those three especially, and perhaps the NAS that is less central to this conversation, convene quickly.

For example, I am in a bit of a bind, we actually have already, we think, worked out with your subcommittee staff requests for site visits, but we haven't worked it out yet with the Monitoring Board.

Indeed, I just had during the break a conversation with Chris Mihm from the GAO, and he believes that we are practically there with respect to an understanding of what they need. So there is some sort of disjuncture between the commentary and the headway we think we have made.

But I am now in a bind because I think you are right, it will be very useful to all get in the room together and try to work out a strategy for the next period. In the meantime, I have a letter from Mr. Blackwell, who simply rejects our guidelines. Those are guidelines; they are not rules. And I am very sorry if the language appeared to be arrogant, I really do apologize for that, but they were guidelines to help us do this.

These are guidelines, by the way, that affect only the people actually doing operations. They are not the guidelines for coming to Suitland. They are not the guidelines for getting data. They are only guidelines affecting people who are doing something, training or recruiting or delivering forms or checking in forms.

And I really cannot have those peoples' schedules disrupted without some sort of warning, some sort of preparation for that. I think if you brought me back here in 2 or 3 weeks and we were having a serious operational problem, because we spent so much time dealing with people who needed to be visiting us and oversighting and so forth, then it would not be a very happy hearing.

So I think my advice, Congresswoman Maloney, is to have the meeting as quickly as we can, that Congressman Miller recommended, and try to have that in such a way, by the time you have a hearing on the 23rd, there will be no questions about trans-

parency. Because I really do not think there are questions about transparency; I think there are questions about whether you can do a real-time audit of an operation that is as complicated as census 2000.

Mrs. MALONEY. In terms of oversight, Mr. Chairman, I would like to hear from the Monitoring Board, both sides. What is it they are looking for and what are they doing? I think it would be appropriate that we not only have the GAO in to report to us and Mr. Prewitt to report to us, but the Monitoring Board, which we funded quite generously, if I recall. What are they doing?

What I think is interesting in all of this oversight—and it continues and I believe in oversight—that none of it has focused on any, "major problem," nor has it found any, "major problem." It has just been a review and a report on the census that seems to be going forward, and in the process that it was supposed to do.

And I would just like to focus on some good news for a while. I know that last year at about this time we had just had a Supreme Court ruling; we were in a partisan fight over the funding of the census. And, quite frankly, now we are in a very positive framework. We have the funding. We have mailings that are going out, what I received, my staff received, that the advertising campaign is going forward. I think the new vans are an incredibly positive addition to the outreach to the community. I think they are very effective. You could use more of them.

Could you just give us some good news of what is happening at the Census Bureau? Can you just tell us some good projects that are happening and some good news about what is happening?

Mr. PREWITT. Well, as you said, the promotional activity is really very well advanced. I think the number of school kits, for example, which are out there, about 1.5 million—as I said, about half a million people have already visited the road van tour, that is, visited, done something, interacted with the van, not just seen it.

I just shared with you some survey data, where I want to make sure I said it right: 85 percent had seen or heard about the census and had some reasonable level of information about it; and about 86–87 percent said they would definitely or probably return the census form.

There is a residual 4 or 5 percent who are saying no. A census is always about the last 5 percent, always about the last 5 percent. Whether it is a problem with recruitment, whether it is a problem with the response rate, whether it is a problem with any operations, it is always the last 5 percent that is the challenge for a census, which has to go to 100 percent.

Nevertheless, I am very gratified and encouraged by the level of public attention and positive attention that the census has already received.

Most importantly—and I will return to my written testimony here—the issues that we deal with all day long, everyday, from bomb threats to public relations problems, to local Census offices where we need to improve our recruitment rate, all of those are manageable problems.

We have yet to hit a problem that is going to, as I say, somehow put the census at risk. It may happen tomorrow. But as I sit here today, we have not hit that problem. I think we are poised to have

a very successful census, a higher-than-expected response rate. It doesn't mean we will get 100 percent response rate, of course.

And to go back to Chairman Miller's comment, if I could, about nonresponse followup, obviously, if we have a higher-than-expected response rate, it is going to help us enormously in the workload during nonresponse followup.

To go back to the 1990 numbers, my recollection is that we planned nonresponse followup for 6 weeks, not 10 weeks; in certain offices it took 16 weeks, but the actual plan was only for 6 weeks. So we actually have added 4 weeks to nonresponse followup in the 2000 design from 1990, a longer period. And as I have testified before, Mr. Miller, we will keep counting until we have exhausted our procedures. And if that takes all summer, we will count all summer. We will count until we have exhausted our procedures.

I appreciate that that is not your view; the one that you quoted, I really do appreciate it is not your view. I really do appreciate that that view is out there. But I don't think that a lot of site visits in March are going to make people feel better—the only way we can prove that is by doing it, come the end of June and the early part of July. We have got to prove it by simply doing it, and we will do it.

Mrs. MALONEY. Earlier you made mention—and both of us have commented, and I must compliment the chairman for his really very sound statements on the official census mailing that mimicked, it was a fundraising letter for the Southeast Legal Foundation. It was mimicked, and it actually looked to me like an official mailing.

And I really want to know, do you think more of these type of shenanigans will take place, and how disruptive are they to the official census?

Mr. PREWITT. It is very hard for me to anticipate. You didn't ask me, but I will answer this question anyway—what keeps me up awake at night? It is not recruitment. What keeps me awake at night is some public event which confuses the American people seriously about the census.

As I cited in my testimony, if a hacker broke in not to the census, but to some other government file and suddenly the American people really did believe that government information was not protected, that would hurt us seriously for that in the next 2 or 3 days.

I will give you another example. We learned just yesterday that another mailing, a large mailing, a large mass mailing has the same digit problem as the one that we experienced. And so I woke up this morning shaking that somehow the story would be told that the Census Bureau had sold its mailing list, how else could this mistake happen again?

Clearly, that is a complete falsehood.

Those are the things that make me anxious. A public story that I know to be wrong, but happens at just the wrong moment, and we can't get it fixed: I am much more frightened of that kind of event or outcome and natural disasters, of course, than I am right now about any of our operations. Our operations are on schedule, on track, on budget.

Mrs. MALONEY. You may not have any information on this, but if you do, I am curious about how recruitment compares to 1990, when we had a much weaker economy. Do you have any comparison as to how recruitment is going now, compared to when we had more unemployed people?

Mr. PREWITT. I start by reminding the committee that with the active support of the U.S. Congress, very active, important support of the U.S. Congress, we have front-loaded our recruitment system. That is the huge change from 1990. In 1990 it wasn't that our rates were so bad, it is that you have high-level attrition, and then you are scrambling to fill those empty positions. By allowing us to front-load, bear in mind, we are hiring two people for every one person we need. Now is that a waste of money? No. If they all come to work and do the job, we just get finished quicker. We will still put them to work. But the attrition levels thus far in our early staffing of our offices and so forth have been quite modest. They were modest in the dress rehearsal. So I would say our overall recruitment plan, as well as recruitment rate, is much, much more robust than 1990.

Again, every day I say, "Look, it is looking good, we are at 70 percent or 74 percent." That doesn't mean that tomorrow it won't go dry. You don't know how deep that well is. But every day we get more calls, as I just said, a million hits to our website just the day before yesterday.

So we think there is a large enough pool out there to recruit. If we have to change wage rates in some areas or do some other kinds of emergency action, we will do it.

Mr. MILLER. Let me ask some more questions on this recruitment issue.

As we both know, national numbers tell you one thing, but it is really a very local issue. What happens in Bradenton, FL, my own home, versus Manhattan—you can't transfer the enumerators from Manhattan to Bradenton. They might want to come to Bradenton, it is a beautiful area. You have been there, a little Chamber of Commerce plug there.

So based on news, the media reports and such about the different areas, there are articles here in the city of Washington, as I mentioned, and such and in New York City.

What percentage of the 520 offices are having problems? And can you give us a description of what those are? Are there any common characteristics, ones that are having problems and such?

Mr. PREWITT. Yes. As of March 1st—no, sorry, March 3rd, so this is fairly recent data, we have a four-layer classification system when we are looking at local recruitment, with green being we feel good, we are really close to target; yellow being we have got to pay a little bit more attention; orange being nervous making; and red being take emergency action.

As of March 3rd, we had five LCOs in our emergency action; that is in our red category. That is, of course, less than 1 percent. It doesn't make them insignificant.

As I say, the problem of a census is always that last 5 percent. But the good thing about those five cases is that they are scattered. It is not like they are all in Atlanta or they are all in New York;

they are all scattered. In fact, I don't think New York has one of these five.

One or two of the five are much less of a problem than what they appear to be. For example, one of them is the LCO in the near north side of Chicago. Now, that LCO covers an area which is actually going to have a higher response rate than the city of Chicago, but it is targeted to have the same response rate as the rest of the city because we didn't break them out in anything like that level of detail. Even though it appears in red, we don't believe it is a red, but we are treating it as one, nevertheless.

Then there are about 17 percent—well, let me say, all together, about 30 percent are in the yellow-orange category, where we do believe we have to take exceptional action, and that includes everything from sending out expertise to doing more advertising and so forth. These numbers fluctuate every week. Some move up and some move down, because that target is still climbing.

So you are actually right, Mr. Chairman. Obviously, you can get a big national picture that looks very good, 74 percent, we only need 70 at this stage, but there is variation around that, and you have got a tail. You have got a small number of cases which are problems, and some of those get picked up in the press—some of them incorrectly, by the way, I have to say; sometimes the press being used by our local recruitment people to tell a more frightening story than actually exists in our numbers in order to generate a public response.

We found two or three cases of that. We weren't particularly happy about it, but nevertheless we understand from a local level why they did it.

And I don't mean, again, to paint a rosy picture. But of the things that worry me right now—and I would not have known this a month ago. I would not have known a month ago that I could sit here today and say now that we are into it, 73,000 people are out there distributing the questionnaires, but that the operation that has to be staffed is staffed.

We fully staffed Alaska on schedule. I believe we will fully staff nonresponse followup on schedule.

Mr. MILLER. How about these hard-to-count areas? Are your staffings doing OK?

Mr. PREWITT. The pattern is not staffing. The near north side is not a hard-to-count area. The pattern is not disproportionately in the hard-to-count areas.

Mr. MILLER. In the last question you mentioned front-loading—this one article was saying they have to call 10 people on the approved list before—you only get 1 out of 10, and the question concerns the shelf life of this applicant pool.

Explain to me the process. I mean, I have heard this: People take the test, they get accepted, but you really don't need them; and then you may not even call them for 2 months, and they don't know.

How are we keeping in touch with these people, letting them know they are in the pool?

Mr. PREWITT. It is a serious problem, as a matter of fact. We think of this recruitment pool the same way you might think of a military draft. You draft everyone, but you don't call everyone. But

when you are going to war, you don't know for sure how many you are going to need and when you are going to need them. You want the pool of draftees in place. Well, what we have done is created a very large pool of draftees, in effect.

It certainly goes stale. We do make calls, people say, no, I have already taken a different job and so forth. So our expected ratio is only 1 out of 5; that is, we want a recruitment pool of, in fact, even less than 1 out of 5, 1 out of 6, a recruitment pool of 2.4 million for about half a million jobs. So roughly a 5-to-1 ratio.

So that is a pretty high ratio, as a matter of fact. I mean, there has got to be an awful lot of decay of that pool before we get down to having none or having fewer than 500,000.

I saw that same story, as a matter of fact, 1 out of 10. That really did surprise me. That doesn't mean it did not happen, but that is not a pattern, that we are only getting 1 out of 10 of our calls when we actually call people.

The other issue you addressed is the issue of keeping in touch with them. We don't. It would just be prohibitively expensive to always be writing them and saying are you still available, are you still available, and then they get angry at us because we haven't called them. There are unhappy people out there who said, "I took the test; I passed it. They say they want jobs. They continue to advertise, yet they don't call me."

We explain that when people take the test. I have the materials here which say exactly what we say to them, and not everyone internalizes that. And they read the ad and they say, why don't they call me. That is an issue, but there is not much we can do about it.

When we need to have them there is on April 19th. We needed them on March 1st to do the training for update leave; they were there. We will need them on April 19th when we start nonresponse followup. As we get closer to nonresponse followup, going to the response rate issue, if the response rate is at our 61 target, we are going to need all half million of them. We will start earlier than the 19th with some kind of reminder system to make sure that they are going to be there.

Mr. MILLER. They are going through training now?

Mr. PREWITT. No, the update/leave people went to training.

Mr. MILLER. The update/leave people went to training.

How long ago would it be that some of these people took the test? Does it go back to last year?

Mr. PREWITT. The testing really didn't much start until January.

Mr. MILLER. Some may have taken the test in January and got approved in January and then——

Mr. PREWITT. Maybe 6 months before we call them.

Mr. MILLER. It could be as much as 6 months?

Mr. PREWITT. Yes. Now, a lot of the people who did the early testing, of course, were people who were brought into our office to work. And we did staff up our offices and, of course, then update/leave, but only in those areas.

There are people who will have taken the test as long as 6 months before they are called. But we would not want to write them and say we don't think we are not going to need you, because we won't know that.

To go back to your other point, you are talking about response rates which themselves are highly variable. You are going to be 85 percent some places and 45 percent other places. So we don't know for sure what those places are going to be.

We can't take a chance on telling someone we don't need them until we know for sure where they will be needed.

Finally, on your question of moving people from New York to Bradenton, as you well know, we very much want to recruit from and use staff in the local community. As a last resort—we probably wouldn't move that far, but as a last resort, we would have to dip into our pool, where we had a deeper pool, to move into areas where we had a shallower pool and pay the transportation costs. We would still take care, of course, to match up the cultural, linguistic, racial characteristics and so forth, best as we could.

Mr. MILLER. I have a couple more questions, but if you want to go first.

Mrs. MALONEY. Sure. The "90 Plus Five" program you outlined in your testimony sounds like a very good idea, a creative way of getting communities across the country involved in boosting their response rates. And do you have any idea how much money you can save if the program goals are met?

Could you just elaborate a little more on the "90 Plus Five" program, another accomplishment I would say?

Mr. PREWITT. We obviously are very excited about that program for two reasons, one of which is, it does have real operational and cost savings implications, but also it is a rallying cry. And I have been very, very pleased by the level of adoption by mayors and Governors around the country. It really is a rallying cry, the census as a civic event.

And it is working that way. I am going off tonight, as a matter of fact, and I will be making, I think as many as six or seven different stops in Virginia and North Carolina. Each one of those is built around the "90 Plus Five" notion, with mayors and complete count committees and other kinds of promotional settings. If it were successful, that is, if we actually added 5 percent to 1990, that is a 70 percent response rate. That is a 9 percent increase from our current target.

Now, you have heard the number before, that each percentage point is worth maybe as much as $25 million; that is a hard number to estimate because it is not exactly linear, but that is order of magnitude. So if we actually were to be that successful, we would save many multiple millions of dollars for the taxpayer if we could actually increase the response rate to 70 percent. It would also be good for the country along other dimensions, of course, not just the money-saving dimension.

Mrs. MALONEY. The Bureau conducted a four-site test, full-load test of the data capture system during the week of February 22nd. And the system was supposed to be fully operational as of March 6, 2000, last Monday. Would you describe the test for us? What was involved? What sorts of equipment were tested? What type of personnel was engaged? What is full load?

Mr. PREWITT. Yes. What that test does is bring up all four of our data capture sites and test them as if they were now pumping the

material through at the rate at which we will have to pump it through during the data capture period itself.

It is our final major test to the data capture system, which is, as we know, a highly technical system. A lot of forms come in wrinkled or smudge marked; all of the kinds of things that can make it difficult to capture those data; and I can only say that it all tested out just exactly the way we expected it to.

Early on in an earlier test, in Pomona I believe it was, our capture rate—our productivity rate was less than what we wanted it to be. We retested that later in Phoenix, and it moved up to expected levels; and then we retested it in our four-site test, the entire system simultaneously.

It is right now—again, I keep wanting to go back. It doesn't mean that tomorrow morning we won't learn something, but as of right now, the data capture system is functioning. We are now capturing data; we are recording stuff as it is coming in. As I said, we have 500 forms already accepted over the telephone, just in the first couple of days.

People are filing by Internet. I don't have the number on that, but it certainly is working. I used it myself. So the systems are functioning.

Mrs. MALONEY. Both the chairman and I are very supportive of Census in the Schools. In fact, we even introduced a resolution supporting it in a bipartisan and joint way.

Could you give us a little more detail on how the program is working? How many schools and teachers are involved? And what percentage of the students do you estimate have been reached and will be reaching their parents, and have the materials been delivered? Has Scholastic performed well on their contract? And can you just give us an overview of it?

Mr. PREWITT. Surely. Just quickly on Scholastic, as the subcontractor on that thing, they performed very, very well, in terms of—we thought in terms of curriculum—the construction of the curriculum, the imaginative design and so forth.

There was a period where we were experiencing severe backlogs in getting the materials to the school. We are now past that backlog completely. We have now got a lag time of only about 3 days before an order comes in and the kit goes out.

I think that the number of kits now out are at 1½ million; that is a huge number of schools. The chairman and I did a really quite attractive Census in the Schools event in his district with very sophisticated kids. I must have done 15 or 20 of them already, about half of them with Members of Congress.

For me, they have been some of the highlights of the census period. I think it is going to be one of the most important things. Look, the kids are really good Ambassadors for the census. And if they go home with this message, then we are going to get a higher response rate and especially we—as you know, we targeted the hard-to-count areas. We are 100 percent in all of those areas. We are obviously not 100 percent across the entire country, but we are 100 percent in the hard-to-count areas, which is roughly 40 percent of the schools, which is how we calculated that. So we are feeling very good about that program.

Mrs. MALONEY. My time is up.

Mr. MILLER. OK. You mentioned Census in the Schools. I did another one recently in Venice, FL, in an elementary school; and I had all the third, fourth and fifth grades come in the cafeteria, and they brought a pencil. And I talked, and we had the map that you make available; and they had two questions that I had to help the students with and—in particular, it makes me think about, because you had to list who else was in your household.

The one young boy says, "Do I count my dog?" I can answer that.

The other one was more difficult, and this is the type of questions you have: The child lives with the mother 3 days a week and the father 4 days a week, and the next week is just reversed; "Who do I get counted with?" Those are some of the questions. And the mother and father may not talk well.

So there are a lot of challenges you are very aware of, but it just came up in that particular hearing.

Mrs. Maloney just brought up the Data Capture System. I know GAO considers that one of the great concerns right now, and they will be testifying again next week. I don't know their latest feeling on it. When the test was run here in February, did it—was it the entire system from when the forms come out of the trucks and load it up and all the way through? Are you comfortable that the data capture system is going to work?

Hopefully, Mrs. Maloney and I can make a trip to one of them during the peak of it and get a chance to see it in operation, because it has to be amazing to see that volume of operation.

Mr. PREWITT. Could I just take an extra 2 minutes and ask John Thompson to say a word. He is much more familiar with that test than I am.

Mr. MILLER. Mr. Thompson.

Mr. THOMPSON. What we did was, we ran about 2.2 million forms per day through our scanners, and then we processed them through the remainder of the process, including transmission of the captured data to headquarters, simultaneously to make sure that all sites worked. That was the workload—actually, the million forms per data headquarters was the workload that we anticipate that we have to meet for census 2000 processing. And the test went very well.

The one thing we didn't test was the sorters. We didn't put the questionnaires back into the envelopes. But we have tested the sorters extensively, and we used them in 1990, so the sorters haven't changed very much.

Mr. MILLER. How about different handwriting and such?

Mr. THOMPSON. Yes, we tested a variety of different handwritings to make sure that the optical character recognition could catch it, including a variety of multiple race responses.

Mr. MILLER. Since C–SPAN is covering this, I might want to make sure that you are introduced. You have been sitting behind Dr. Prewitt in the past several hearings while he testified. But you are the one with the responsibility and had the task and you have been in charge of this.

When were you first appointed to this position?

Mr. THOMPSON. I believe I was appointed in 1998 to the position I am currently in.

Mr. MILLER. 1998. Tough job.

Mr. THOMPSON. I have been working on the census since——

Mr. MILLER. You are a career.

Mr. THOMPSON [continuing]. Since 1980.

Mr. MILLER. You have been with the Bureau for a long time. I think this may be your first time to actually talk to the committee. Thank you very much. It is a tough job, and you do a fine job there.

I have one more question. It came up in your comments, and I mentioned it too in the Salvation Army, the access to facilities serving special populations such as the Salvation Army. How much of a problem is that? Is there anything we can do to move this along?

Mr. PREWITT. I appreciate that offer, Mr. Chairman.

No, I actually have been in very close touch with the highest lieutenant colonel, I believe he is called, of the Salvation Army. It is an understandable reluctance. Their judgment is that when people are eating, that this is something which is private. It is not a confidentiality issue. It is a privacy issue.

And they are concerned that if the people who are actually sitting in the dining halls and having their meals are being enumerated that that will create a deterrent for them to come in and get the meal.

The Salvation Army has been completely cooperative with respect to counting all of their residents, all the people who sleep there. But it is just this one issue of the people, actually while they are eating their meal. So what we have worked out with the Salvation Army is that these people do queue, they do get into a line before they come into the dining hall or the soup kitchen, and we will be able to count during that period.

I should remind you that the primary count of the people without conventional housing, as we say, or the homeless, is based on where they sleep, not where they eat. Where they eat is only an extra safety net in case we miss some people who don't use any shelters. If the people are sheltered, we think we will get them in the shelters.

These are really the people who don't go to the shelters, but do come in and do get meals. We are still trying to count the people who are sleeping in the park or sleeping on the beach. We fear we will not get all of them. So this is an extra, extra step. Indeed, we have to ask the people we are counting, as they get the meal, have you already spent a night in a shelter, because if they have, then we would not be including them in the count.

So it is a very small problem, and we think we will solve it.

Mr. MILLER. Let me thank you for your assurance a few minutes ago that you are going—as far as close out, you are going to stay in the field as long as it is necessary to get the possible count. I appreciate your public assurance of that.

Mrs. Maloney, do you have any final questions?

Mrs. MALONEY. No. I have enjoyed this. I look forward to the GAO reporting, and again would like to request that the chairman call the Monitoring Board, both sides, to come in and report to us.

I think that is a legitimate oversight of our body, too, to look into what the Monitoring Board is doing.

Mr. MILLER. I think we have a hearing tentatively scheduled for the issue of this access. This is a serious—whether it is real or per-

ceived, it is certainly perceived; and I think we need to get to the bottom of it.

I think I see Mr. Fred Asbell, who is with—at least on the congressional side of the Monitoring Board here. I think Chris Mihm was here earlier, certainly; I don't know if he still is. There, he is there.

I know you all don't have your calendars, so you can't do it today, but I almost like to say—to pin you all down. But if you could get it put together as quickly as possible, I would like to get this behind us.

I think we are getting to some critical stages, as you know, going into the summer. We don't want to do anything to interrupt or interfere with the census, but we do have a responsibility to make sure that we know everything we can, and a lot of it is gearing up for how do you do. A lot of times this information is needed.

So I thank you for being here today.

On behalf of subcommittee, I would like to thank you for appearing before us today. I ask unanimous consent that all Members' and witnesses' written opening statements be included in the record. Without objection, so ordered.

In case there are any additional questions that Members may have for our witnesses, I ask unanimous consent for the record to remain open for 2 weeks for Members to submit questions for the record, and that witnesses submit written answers as soon as practicable. I would like to submit the Census Monitoring Board's congressional Members' request for oversight materials, mentioned in my opening statement for the record. I am also submitting the observation guidelines issued by the Census Bureau for the record.

And, Mrs. Maloney, you had something which will be included in the record. Without objection, so ordered.

[The information referred to follows:]

Attachment B

OBSERVATION GUIDELINES FOR CENSUS 2000 OPERATIONS

For Distribution to Advisory Committees
and Oversight Groups
Revised December 15, 1999
Field Decennial Oversight Staff

OBSERVATION GUIDELINES FOR CENSUS 2000 OPERATIONS

PURPOSE To ensure that regional staff and offices are able to conduct Census 2000 activities on schedule, in an organized, businesslike manner, without excessive disruptions to decennial planning and field operations by advisory committees and oversight groups.

ARRANGING OBSERVATIONS Advisory committees and oversight groups must give the Census Bureau ***a minimum*** two weeks advance notice of a proposed visit to a regional office. The initial request must be made through the appropriate Headquarters contact. The Headquarters contact will then forward the request to Field Decennial Oversight staff who will notify the regions once the request has been reviewed.

The advisory committee or oversight group must provide the proposed dates of the visit, the names of the individuals participating in the observation visit, and the purpose and scope of the visit. Last minute changes are strongly discouraged and may not be able to be accommodated.

Meetings with regional management staff, including the Regional Director, must also be requested two weeks in advance and still may not be possible because of on-site operational needs and demands.

Meetings and conversations with Complete Count Committees members and other non-Census Bureau employees and individuals must be made independently and without the assistance of Census Bureau personnel.

UNSCHEDULED VISITS/ SCHEDULE ADJUSTMENTS Unscheduled visits from advisory committees and oversight groups will not be accommodated by a Local Census Office, Regional Census Center, or the Regional Office. The requesting official will be advised to make arrangements through their Headquarters contact.

ACCOMPANYING VISITORS The Regional Director or an Assistant Regional Census Manager should accompany Census Monitoring Board, Congressional Subcommittee, and Department of Commerce officials on all observation visits. On some visits involving these advisory committees and oversight groups, a Headquarters staff member will also accompany the observers. Regions will be notified in advance when this occurs.

GAO, OIG, and Advisory Committee officials should be accompanied by appropriate field

staff as determined by the Regional Director and the Headquarters contact. Headquarters staff may accompany observers on some visits.

ORDER OF PRIORITY Regional census operations must come first and may, from time to time, preclude a scheduled observation visit. Early notification of proposed observation visits enables the Census Bureau to inform advisory committees and oversight groups of possible schedule changes and modifications well in advance of planned visits.

SWEARING-IN/ IDENTIFICATION Due to the Census Bureau's obligation to ensure the confidentiality of the information it collects, each observer must be sworn in as an agent of the Census Bureau before observing and/or participating in Census Bureau operations. Observers must contact the Field Division's Decennial Oversight Staff at least one week in advance of site visits to arrange to be sworn in. Swearing in may take place at the regional offices, as appropriate. Failure to sign required confidentiality forms and follow established procedures for swearing in voids all opportunities to participate in observational activities.

Observers must always carry proof of their sworn status (Form BC-1759) at all times and present this information upon request at Census Bureau facilities.

Upon arrival, observers must also identify themselves by showing the proper temporary visitors pass to an appropriate staff member.

CONFIDENTIALITY Observers have an obligation to ensure that all information reviewed or collected is kept confidential and not shared with anyone who is not a sworn Census Bureau employee or agent. Appropriate safeguards (as directed by the Census Bureau) must be taken to protect confidential and Title 13 data.

Observers must not disclose reviewed or collected data (including addresses), in a form that will permit identification of any individual respondent (including persons, corporations, partnerships, associations, and other organizations). Also, data may only be used for the purposes for which they are collected; specifically, the data may not be used for law enforcement, regulatory, or other activities.

Observers are discouraged from taking photos during observation visits, and absolutely no photos of Title 13 information is allowed.

LENGTH OF VISIT Most activities can be observed in a single day. Requests for longer visits will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

NUMBER OF OBSERVERS No more than two observers can participate in any planned observation, with the exception of enumeration observations which should be conducted on a 1:1 enumeration/observer ratio. Any more than this 1:1 ratio can influence the outcome of the procedure or operation. The Census Subcommittee and Census Monitoring Board may require a second observer during some interviews and other field observations to accommodate their organizational structure.

TRAINING OBSERVATIONS Observers should refrain from distracting, interrupting, participating in, or otherwise interfering with training sessions.

Training materials will be provided to trainees **FIRST**. Similarly, trainees will be given priority on space in all training sessions. The Regional Director has the authority to restrict observers from participating in training sessions if space is not available.

ENUMERATION OBSERVATION Observers should refrain from distracting, participating in, or otherwise interfering with the enumeration process. Observers must not make any comments during an interview or in any

decennial operation unless the respondent specifically addresses a question to the observer. Observers will conform to the interviewer's work schedule for the day, including the hours to be worked and locations visited.

Note-taking is discouraged during the conduct of the interview. Both the interviewer and the respondent may become nervous if the observer appears to be recording extensive notes.

Census workers' residences are off limits to observers for any purpose. Observations of telephone interviewing techniques should not include the use of a census worker's home.

Observers must always be on time when meeting enumerators at arranged sites for observations. If the observer is late, the enumerator will be instructed to proceed without the observer.

REGIONAL STAFF RESPONSIBILITY IN ENUMERATION OBSERVATIONS The regional staff will notify the enumerator that he/she will be observed and will provide the enumerator's name and title to the observer.

The regional staff will inform the enumerator of the above responsibilities of the observer, particularly as it pertains to

enumeration observations.

CENSUS WORKER RESPONSIBILITIES IN ENUMERATION OBSERVATIONS The interviewer will be instructed to introduce the observer to the respondent, identify the organization or agency for which the observer works, and indicate that the observer is a sworn agent of the Census Bureau.

TRAVEL/HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS Observers are responsible for their own hotel and travel accommodations or will work with appropriate Headquarters staff to make arrangements. Observers must also provide their own transportation when visiting or participating in field activities. Observers should refrain from requesting that interviewers or other Field staff take them to airports or other locations.

Mr. MILLER. Thank you again. And I will see you at the Appropriations hearing in a couple of weeks. The meeting is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:35 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

[Additional information submitted for the hearing record follows:]

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ONE HUNDRED SIXTH CONGRESS

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INDEPENDENT

March 21, 2000

The Honorable Kenneth Prewitt
Director, Bureau of the Census
Suitland Federal Center
Room 2049, Building 3
Washington, DC 20233

Dear Director Prewitt:

Thank you for testifying before the Government Reform and Oversight Subcommittee on the Census on March 8, 2000. Due to time constraints, I was left with a number of questions unanswered and I request that you provide responses to the following:

1. How long has it been since the last software update has been added to DCS 2000 and how many tests have been run since this final update?

2. What types of personnel were present during the recent data processing tests? Were there temporary census workers running the equipment, or was the testing run by professional Census Bureau personnel?

3. During the data processing tests that were conducted the last week in February, were there any problems that arose that may have hindered the operation of the DCS 2000 systems?

4. Please explain what happened with the misaddressing of the pre-notification letter. Why wasn't this error caught by quality control measures?

5. Was the pre-notification letter tested on focus groups? If so, explain. If not, why was it not tested?

6. Why wasn't the toll free telephone assistance number provided in the pre-notification letter?

7. Why did the letter not explain in English what recipients were to do with the provided envelope?

8. How closely does the Census Bureau work with the Government Printing Office and its subcontractors on contracts to be filled for Census 2000?

9. Could you explain the types of quality control measures and/or monitoring of production that the Census Bureau stipulates under standard government contracting practices?

Please provide responses to these questions by close of business, April 4, 2000. My questions and your answers will be part of the official record of the March 8, 2000 hearing. Again, thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Dan Miller
Chairman
Subcommittee on the Census

cc: The Honorable Carolyn Maloney

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, DC 20233-0001
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

APR 20 2000

The Honorable Dan Miller
Chairman, Subcommittee on the Census
Committee on Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-6143

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter of March 21, 2000, transmitting the following questions subsequent to the Subcommittee hearing of March 8, 2000.

"1. How long has it been since the last software update has been added to DCS 2000 and how many tests have been run since this final update?"

The last software update for the Data Capture System 2000 (DCS), referred to as Drop 23, was installed at all Data Capture Centers (DCC) between February 11 and February 16, 2000. Software Drop 23 is currently being used at all of the DCCs for the data capture operation. Tests were conducted at each site during the last week in February 2000. These were the final tests before the data capture operation began on March 6, 2000.

"2. What types of personnel were present during the recent data processing tests? Were there temporary census workers running the equipment, or was the testing run by professional Census Bureau personnel?"

During the tests conducted in the last week of February 2000, only temporary census workers were employed to run all data capture operations and equipment.

"3. During the data processing tests that were conducted the last week in February, were there any problems that arose that may have hindered the operation of the DCS 2000 systems?"

No, there were not.

"4. Please explain what happened with the misaddressing of the pre-notification letter. Why wasn't this error caught by quality control measures?"

The United States Postal Service (USPS) notified the U.S. Census Bureau that the prenotification letter arrived with a "superfluous" lead numeric character in front of the "house number." The postal net barcode, however, contained the correct house number. The USPS provided guidance to their local/regional network to proceed with delivery. As the correct postal net barcode is used in the USPS automated processing system, they were able to deliver the letters to their correct addresses.

The quality assurance procedures in place for the prenotification letter did not identify the address error. At the preaward survey, the contractor produced the prenotification letter correctly using a dummy address file. During production, the contractor randomly selected 200 copies

per 24-hour production day of each item of the letter at each stage of production. These were shipped to the National Processing Center (NPC) in Jeffersonville, Indiana. Staff at the NPC reviewed the identification number on the back of the letter. Unfortunately, the quality assurance procedures did not require a check of the addresses at the NPC. As the quality assurance procedures for the questionnaires were more extensive, any problems of this nature were identified early in the process, and this error was not replicated in those addresses.

"5. Was the pre-notification letter tested on focus groups? If so, explain. If not, why was it not tested?"

The original purpose of the advance letter was to ensure a heightened anticipation among households about receiving the Census 2000 questionnaire. Prior to the Census 2000 Dress Rehearsal, the advance letter was thoroughly tested on focus groups. However, the decision to include the return envelope with the advance letter grew out of changes in our language program late in the planning cycle. Based in part on our experience in the Dress Rehearsal, we decided it was necessary to modify the advance letter so that respondents could use it to request a questionnaire in a language other than English. We did not have time to conduct a test of the revised mailing plan, which could have revealed the confusion that some people receiving the letter experienced.

"6. Why wasn't the toll free telephone assistance number provided in the pre-notification letter?"

The Census Bureau made the decision not to include the 1-800 number in the prenotification letter after conferring with consultants in the telecommunications industry and reviewing our experiences in past censuses. The toll free telephone assistance number was set up to provide respondents with assistance in filling out their questionnaires. The overriding concern was that if people received this number before the questionnaires were mailed out, they would attempt to call the number before the Telephone Questionnaire Assistance centers were set up and ready to receive the high volume of calls we anticipated.

"7. Why did the letter not explain in English what recipients were to do with the provided envelope?"

As mentioned in response to Question No. 5, the prenotification letter was modified late in the planning cycle when changes were made to the language program subsequent to the Census 2000 Dress Rehearsal. The letter provided people with the opportunity to indicate on the back that they would like to receive a questionnaire in one of five languages other than English, and the return envelope was included for those individuals to return their advance letter to us. In retrospect, we should have included a notification that told the English-speaking individuals about the return envelope. If we had time to conduct a test of the revised mailing plan, we might have discovered that the letter, as written, created confusion. Nonetheless, all indications are that the advanced letter is meeting its projected goal, as a significant number of people used it to request a translated questionnaire.

"8. How closely does the Census Bureau work with the Government Printing Office and its subcontractors on contracts to be filled for Census 2000?"

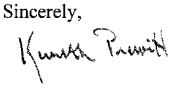
For the printing of the questionnaires for Census 2000, the Census Bureau works through the Government Printing Office (GPO) to obtain the required printing services. GPO has the contracting authority for these print contracts, and thus all legal authority resides with them. The Census Bureau provides GPO with the printing requirements (technical specifications, quantities, forms design, quality assurance, and the like) for each contract. GPO then advertises and awards the contract. Once the contract is awarded, GPO is responsible for approving ink, paper, and prior-to-production samples. They also are responsible for ensuring that all contract requirements are being fulfilled. However, Census Bureau staff work hand-in-hand with GPO to monitor the quality of the product (both prior-to-production samples and final production) to make sure that each form is produced according to the established specifications.

"9. Could you explain the types of quality control measures and/or monitoring of production that the Census Bureau stipulates under standard government contracting practices?"

The Census Bureau's standard operating procedure is to include the standard Federal Acquisition Regulation clauses for inspection and quality assurance. In addition, the Census Bureau supplements many individual contracts with various additional requirements for quality assurance plans. For example, clauses may be included in a given contract to identify responsible officials or offices and clarify the procedures they are to use to review the contractor's performance. Such clauses may include a task-by-task listing of the measurements/metrics to be utilized and the levels of performance required to fulfill the contract. Over and above the contractual clauses, the Census Bureau's acquisition staff monitors contractor performance and provides regular feedback to the Contracting Officer and the Program Managers. The Census Bureau uses this information in decisions regarding ongoing performance under the contract and to establish or define contractor incentives. This information also is used to produce "past performance evaluations" to influence future awards.

We hope this letter addresses your concerns. Should you have any further questions, please have a member of your staff contact Robin Bachman, Chief of the Congressional Affairs Office, at (301) 457-2171.

Sincerely,



Kenneth Prewitt
Director

cc: The Honorable Carolyn Maloney