

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074  
MINORITY (202) 225-5051

<http://oversight.house.gov>

### Opening Statement

#### Ranking Member Gerald E. Connolly (VA-11)

#### Subcommittee on Government Operations

#### Hearing on “2020 Census: Outcomes of the 2016 Site Tests”

#### November 16, 2016

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing to examine the Census Bureau’s 2016 tests for the upcoming 2020 Decennial Census.

The decennial census is a cornerstone of our constitutional system of government. It is used to apportion seats in the House of Representatives, define state legislature districts, and determine school district assignments.

Census data helps the private sector make sound investments by identifying unsaturated or emerging growth markets and developing business plans and loan applications.

The data also helps Congress make decisions on how to fund special-education grants, provide adoption assistance, create small business development centers, offer rural business enterprise grants, and other programs vital to the American economy.

The 2020 Decennial Census will be the first to embrace information collection technology on a broad scale. According to the Bureau’s calculations, the Bureau’s information technology plans will make the 2020 Decennial Census leaner and result in \$5.2 billion in savings, compared to its 2010 Census methods.

But those savings can only be realized if the Bureau’s plans are fully implemented and operate without interruption, and if the Bureau is able to accomplish its Constitutional mandate and accurately count all residents.

The Government Accountability Office is advising Congress that it has concerns. They tell us that 25% of households in recent field tests could not be contacted by Bureau enumerators, even after six attempts. For example, large, multi-unit buildings and locked or gated communities were most problematic, as enumerators were unable to enter the property. The Bureau’s software also made it difficult for enumerators to leave notes, which would help indicate what time of day a dwelling’s resident was likely to be present.

The Bureau also had difficulty in creating enumerator canvass lists from administrative data, and enumerators had training difficulties which resulted in diminished performance.

Our goal in this hearing is to ensure that the Bureau answers the concerns of the GAO, learns the lessons from its field tests, and fixes problems in advance of the 2020 Decennial Census.

This Subcommittee has a role to play in a successful Census. We must ensure that the Bureau continues to make progress in the next three years; improves their policies, procedures, and technology based on information gained in field tests; and test and re-test those improvements before the 2020 Census. In October, I joined Chairman Chaffetz, Ranking Member Cummings, and Chairman Meadows in inquiring on the status of the critical IT decisions related to the 2020 Census that had yet to be made and the Bureau's overall preparedness for the 2020 Census. We were pleased to receive a quick response, and will continue to work with the Bureau to ensure that the CEDCap initiative stays on schedule.

The Bureau has been making some progress. It recently hired a new Chief Information Officer, Kevin Smith, who is one of our witnesses today. The presence of Mr. Smith in an office that had been without a permanent leader for nearly a year is a welcome sign. While he has only been in the position for a few months, I look forward to hearing the steps he has taken to improve the Bureau's IT infrastructure.

Again, I'd like to thank the Chairman for calling this hearing and thank our witnesses for testifying here today.

I look forward to hearing about the Bureau's progress and the challenges that lie ahead.

---

Contact: Jennifer Werner, Communications Director, (202) 226-5181