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Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman Chairman, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform 2010 Census: Assessing the Census Bureau's Progress June 11, 2008

Two months ago, this Committee held a hearing to examine a contract to use handheld computers to conduct the 2010 Census. We learned that due to serious mismanagement, the Census Bureau was forced to abandon its plans for the handheld computers and to revert to a paper census. These changes will cost the taxpayer up to \$3 billion.

The costly decision to return to a paper census was avoidable. For years, the Government Accountability Office and other auditors raised concerns about the Census Bureau's management of the contract. But the Census Bureau failed to respond to these concerns with any sense of leadership or urgency. At the April hearing, the GAO witnesses described the situation as "unacceptable" and a "failure in management."

Chairman Clay and I called today's hearing to find out what progress the Census Bureau has made since early April. As promised at the April hearing, the Census Bureau has completed a re-plan for the paper-based non-response follow-up, an integrated project schedule, and a software testing plan for address canvassing. The Bureau also has given its contractor, the Harris Corporation, a new set of requirements for non-response follow-up. Today we will ask GAO and the MITRE Corporation to provide their independent assessment of these plans and whether they provide a road map for a successful 2010 Census.

Already there are warning signs of further problems. After the April joint committee hearing and at the request of Chairman Clay, the Census Bureau directed MITRE to review Harris Corporation's \$1.3 billion cost estimate. MITRE concluded that the revised contract with Harris Corporation should cost just \$726 million, almost half of the contractor's original estimate.

The decennial census is an essential, constitutionally mandated program. Its results have implications for congressional representation and for billions of dollars in federal funding decisions. We cannot afford to get this wrong. The 2010 Census will take place in less than 22 months. This date cannot be changed, and it cannot be delayed. The Committee will not stop its efforts to determine what went wrong, but our primary goal today will be getting the census back on track.