

**Prepared Statement of John H. Thompson
Nominee to be Director of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce**

**Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
July 9, 2013**

Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Coburn, and members of the Committee, I am very pleased that you have convened this hearing to consider my nomination to the position of Director of the U.S. Census Bureau. I would like to begin by thanking President Obama for nominating me to one of the most important positions in the federal statistical system. It is both an honor and a privilege to be given the opportunity to return to public service. I would also like to thank my wife Bonnie, my family, and my colleagues at the National Opinion Research Center for their support and encouragement.

I agree with the views of a number of previous Census Bureau Directors, that a democracy needs credible, objective and timely information on the growth of its population, the changing characteristics of its communities and the health of its businesses to form the basis of solid policy decisions and other critical functions of governance. The statistical agencies produce such information in the United States. They are guided by principles of non-partisanship, protection of individual privacy, and provision of high quality information to inform decision makers and the public on the important issues facing our society and nation. The Census Bureau is an important component of this information infrastructure. The statistics it collects are used to produce economic indicators, to determine the needs of local communities and to inform policies to make American businesses more competitive. We are seeing a growing need for such data to support our economic growth and create jobs; and it is playing an increasingly significant role in all aspects of our daily lives. Going forward, our country will rely more heavily on institutions like the Census Bureau to deliver this vital resource. The next leader of the Census Bureau, therefore, must be committed to maintaining the Bureau's stature as the exemplary collector and disseminator of the highest quality information to help America forge its data-driven future.

However, there are a number of rapidly emerging challenges and opportunities that have the potential to dramatically change the way in which information is collected, analyzed, and disseminated. Organizations that will be successful in the future must seize on these opportunities to produce quality information on a more timely and efficient basis. I am seeking your support for my nomination, because I believe that I can provide the leadership and guidance that the Census Bureau needs at this critical time. If confirmed, I can assure you that I will use all of my skills and intellect to take the Census Bureau into the future, building on the exceptional groundwork that Dr. Robert Groves has already put in place.

I spent 27 years at the Census Bureau, followed by over 10 years at National Opinion Research Center. At the Census Bureau, I held a number of management positions with increasing responsibility for the 1980, 1990, and 2000 Censuses. The most significant being from 1997 through June 2001 when I served as the Associate Director for Decennial Censuses – the career executive with responsibility for all aspects of Census 2000. I am proud to note that Census 2000 was the first to employ state-of-the-art technology in optical scanning and intelligent character recognition to capture all of the information from the questionnaires, and all major operations were completed on schedule and within budget.

I joined National Opinion Research Center (NORC) in 2002 as Executive Vice President and became its President in 2008. NORC has been conducting important research for the public good for over 70 years. It uses rigorous and innovative methods to conduct large surveys as well as the analysis and

dissemination of objective information to inform decision-makers and the public on important social, economic, and behavioral issues facing the nation and the international community. During my tenure, I have seen and dealt with the dramatic changes that emerging technology can have on survey processes. Importantly, I have dealt with the growing demands to produce more information, faster and less expensively through adoption of new technology and data sources. These are challenges that leaders of both private and Federal statistical organizations, including the Census Bureau, must be prepared to successfully confront.

The Census Bureau, however, has a unique challenge and – at the same time – opportunity with respect to planning the 2020 census. I believe that the resources now available will support a new census design that will fundamentally change the way in which censuses are taken in the United States – a design that has the potential to produce significantly less costly and faster results that are of similar or better quality than in previous censuses. Among the most promising options to accomplish this are:

1. Using the Internet as the primary self-response option.
2. Taking advantage of technology and operations research methods to reengineer the field data collection operations – reducing both the infrastructure required to support these operations and the actual hours that enumerators spend collecting the data.
3. Making better use of Federal records to further reduce the dependence on in-person visits for data collection.
4. Drawing on the extensive array of emerging geographic tools and data sets to eliminate the need to physically canvass large portions of the United States to prepare the address list to support the 2020 Census.

In summary, the environment in which statistical agencies conduct their business is in a period of dynamic change with both risks and opportunities. I know what it means to manage in such an environment. Organizations that will be successful must constantly track emerging trends and advances and determine how they can be used to generate new and more effective processes. Most importantly, organizations must create and foster a culture of adaptability and creativity.

I want to bring the skills I have developed both inside and outside of government to lead the Census Bureau. If I am confirmed, my goal will be to leave a legacy of innovation in all areas and in all levels of the Census Bureau, and to design a 2020 Census that represents a fundamental change for the future. I am committed to accomplishing this in an environment that is open and transparent to all stakeholders.

Thank you and I am looking forward to working with this Committee.