



September 28, 2018

The Honorable Ron Johnson  
The Honorable Claire McCaskill  
United States Senate  
Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Johnson and Ranking Member McCaskill:

Thank you for holding a hearing on October 3 to consider the nomination of Dr. Steven Dillingham to be the next director of the U.S. Census Bureau. As co-directors of [The Census Project](http://www.thecensusproject.org),<sup>1</sup> a broad-based, nonpartisan group of stakeholders who rely on accurate, timely, and comprehensive data produced by the U.S. Census Bureau and support data-driven decision making, we urge you to carefully consider the nominee, the requirements for the position, and the essential nature of his proposed role on the verge of the 2020 Census.

The need for strong, decisive leadership at the Census Bureau, particularly at this juncture, cannot be overstated.

With the start of the decennial headcount less than two years away, the Bureau must have a highly qualified and respected director in place as soon as possible. If confirmed in a timely fashion, a new director will have to quickly learn from the results of the 2018 End-to-End Readiness Test (which, as a result of recent funding shortfalls was reduced to a small test in Providence, RI this spring) and oversee final design decisions and preparations for the 2020 Census. The Census Director also must strengthen and streamline the American Community Survey (ACS), formerly known as the “Long Form,” which updates census (socioeconomic, demographic, and housing) data throughout the decade.

Dr. Dillingham has most recently served as director of the Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning for the U.S. Peace Corps. Previously, he led the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the Bureau of Transportation Statistics in prior GOP administrations. He has graduate degrees in law and public administration from the University of South Carolina and an undergraduate degree in political science from Winthrop University.

The Committee has specific statutory guidance on what to seek in a Census Bureau Director. **The Presidential Appointment Efficiency and Streamlining Act of 2011** (P.L. 112-166) requires that the Census Bureau Director have “demonstrated ability in managing large organizations and experience in the collection, analysis, and use of statistical data.” As census stakeholders, members of the Census Project know that the next director should also be someone with: (1) respect in the statistical community; (2) the ability to interact effectively with Congress, the Administration, and census stakeholders in the public and private sectors; and (3) understand the National Academies’ Principles and Practices for a Federal Statistical Agency.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.thecensusproject.org>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/24810/principles-and-practices-for-a-federal-statistical-agency-sixth-edition>

We also look forward to hearing Dr. Dillingham's views about a variety of 2020 Census issues, including: the addition of an untested citizenship question, which threatens to diminish response rates and increase the costs of conducting the 2020 Census; a potentially higher undercount in rural areas and small towns given the cancellation of the 2017 field tests in remote areas and native reservations and the 2018 End-to-End Readiness Test site in West Virginia; cybersecurity and IT challenges the nation's first digital decennial census poses; and a myriad of budget and operational dilemmas still plaguing the 2020 Census.

Decennial census data are central to American democracy, affecting not only apportionment and redistricting, but also the distribution of approximately \$600 billion in annual federal funding and key investment decisions by the private sector. Given the significance of the Bureau's mission and the data it produces, the next Director should continue the agency's tradition of political independence and maintain public confidence in the decennial census and the other critical surveys and programs that the Census Bureau administers

Thank you again for holding this important hearing and considering our views.

Sincerely,



Phil Sparks  
Co-Director



Mary Jo Hoeksema  
Co-Director



Howard Fienberg  
Co-Director