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**Comptroller General
of the United States**

**United States Government Accountability Office
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PRESS RELEASE

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GAO Adds the 2010 Census to “High-Risk” List

Washington (March 6, 2008) – The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) today added the 2010 census to its “High-Risk” list of federal areas in need of either broad-based transformation or specific reforms to prevent waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement.

Although a regular update to its high-risk list is set for 2009, GAO decided it was important to flag the census now because of the survey’s impact on everything from the apportionment of congressional seats to the distribution of billions of dollars in federal funds.

GAO added the upcoming census to the high-risk list due to a combination of long-standing deficiencies and emerging challenges, including shortcomings in the Census Bureau’s management of information technology, weak performances by technology that the Bureau plans to use for data collection, uncertainty of cost estimates, and the elimination of several dress rehearsal activities.

David M. Walker, Comptroller General of the United States, announced the addition, saying, “Our objective for the high-risk list is to bring attention and persuade policymakers of the need for action sooner rather than later. In the case of the decennial census, proactive measures now, well in advance of the actual census, can do much to ensure accurate and reliable outcomes in 2010.”

GAO testified on this issue before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs on Wednesday, in its continuing focus on preparations for the 2010 Census. In addition, the Comptroller General sent a letter to the Secretary of Commerce alerting him to the concerns leading to GAO’s decision.

The addition of the decennial census leaves 28 programs and activities on GAO’s current high-risk list. There were 14 areas on the high-risk list when the program was launched in 1990. Since then, there have been 34 additions, 18 removals, and two areas that were consolidated. The list is updated every two years and released at the start of each new Congress to help set oversight agendas. Congress and the executive branch have increasingly turned to GAO’s high-risk list for ideas on how to improve government economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and equity.

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