



U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

CONFIRMATION HEARING FOR ROBERT GROVES

CHAIRMAN:
SENATOR THOMAS CARPER (D-DE)

SPEAKER:
ROBERT GROVES,
DIRECTOR NOMINEE,
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

FRIDAY, MAY 15, 2009

*Transcript by
Federal News Service
Washington, D.C.*

SENATOR THOMAS CARPER (D-DE): The subcommittee will come to order. I welcome one and all. I just wanted to take a moment and talk about the agenda here today. We'll start off by calling on our colleague, Senator Carl Levin, to introduce our nominee. And after he's done that, he's welcome to stay for as long as he would like. And if – I know he has a lot on his plate – but if he can stay, he's welcome to stay for as long as his schedule permits. After he's spoken and I'll give an opening statement – a fairly lengthy one – we'll swear in our witness. We have to ask you to stand and take an oath, and then, after you've given your statement, we'll break for lunch.

We'll take two hours for lunch – (laughter) – come back, and – no, we'll not break for lunch; we'll go right into the question and answer, and probably be out of here, my guess is, within an hour-and-a-half. And some of our colleagues are going to be joining us, so as they come, they'll have the opportunity to make statements and to join in the questioning. We're delighted to be here, and Senator Levin, we're especially glad that you're here to introduce Dr. Groves to us today.

SENATOR CARL LEVIN (D-MI): Chairman Carper, thanks for your introduction, your comments, your constant goodwill, good nature, hospitality. Thank you. I'm pleased to introduce Bob Groves to the committee this morning. Bob is a long-time Michigan resident. He's been part of the University of Michigan community since he began his master's study at Ann Arbor in 1970. He graduated Summa Cum Laude from Dartmouth with a degree in sociology and earned master's degrees in statistics and sociology and a doctorate in sociology from the University of Michigan.

He is currently a professor in the department of sociology, and most significantly, I believe, is the director of the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center. He is, to put it mildly, a highly respected expert in survey methodology and statistics, and I want to reassure the chairman he is also a strong fan of the Detroit Tigers. (Laughter.) And I say that because our chairman is a strong fan of the Detroit Tigers.

SEN. CARPER: We'll go right to the confirmation now.

(Laughter.)

SEN. LEVIN: Bob's mentor throughout graduate school was Professor Leslie Kish, who was one of the greatest statisticians of our time. He was also the father of Carla Kish, who was a staffer in my office about 20-some years ago. I believe that she is here today as one of Bob's guests. Professor Kish was Bob's mentor through graduate school, and throughout their careers. Professor Kish and Bob collaborated extensively, researching ways to improve surveys.

Professor Kish was behind the idea of an annual, rolling census of the population, which led to the creation of the American Community Survey. He was also instrumental in the wide acceptance of probability sampling. The chairman could ask our nominee what that is – (laughter) – because I know it sounds good, but I'm not sure exactly what that does mean. (Laughter.)

As head of the Institute for Social Research and the Survey Research Center, Bob heads one of the most important research institutes in our country. It is the largest academic-based research institute of its kind in the world. It has educated many of our nation's scientific leaders in the field of survey statistics. He was elected by the research faculty to lead that center in 2001. That's what his peers think of him.

He also – (coughs) – excuse me – has experience at the U.S. Census Bureau itself. In 1982, he was a visiting statistician at the Census. He returned to the bureau eight years later and served as the associate director for statistical design standards and methodology. He's written several books and dozens of articles and book chapters on survey methods. Much of his work is focused on increasing response rates to polls and surveys. He's used his research and expertise to help design surveys for numerous agencies, organizations and universities, including the National Institutes of Health, the American Lung Association, Cornell University and the National Center for Educational Statistics.

He's been endorsed for the position of director of the Census Bureau by many scientific and professional associations, including the American Statistical Association, the American Sociological Association, the Council of American Survey Research Organizations, and perhaps most significantly – I believe perhaps the most significant endorsement of all, far more important, surely, than mine – he has been endorsed by six former directors of the U.S. Census Bureau, who were appointed by both Republican and Democratic presidents. And these include Presidents Carter, Reagan, President H.W. – Herbert Walker – Bush, President Clinton and George W. Bush. So the Census directors for all those presidents wrote a letter to the committee, and this letter has been received, I know, by the committee.

I'm tempted to read from it, but I think I won't in the interests of time, other than to say it is a glowing endorsement of our nominee. And I know it will be made part of the record, and again, to me, this is the most significant endorsement that any nominee for the Census Bureau can receive, is the support of directors under presidents of both parties for this position. So Dr. Groves is before you today because of his expertise in survey methodology and statistics. He's driven by a desire to be of public service. His hallmarks have been – and will be – his belief in scientific methods and his independence.

And that pursuit of science and his characteristic of personal integrity of independence are the characteristics required by the position to which he has been nominated. So it's a pleasure of mine to be with you today. And I thank you, again, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing and hope that this can proceed expeditiously, after consideration by this committee and the Senate, because I know there's a great need to have this position filled so we can get on with the next census, which is looming before us.

So I think, our chairman, I won't be able to stay, and I know your nominee will – after your comments, when it is his turn – will introduce his family and perhaps one or two of his supporting crew. I've taken a statistical sample of the people who are with him this morning – (laughter) – they are 100 percent supportive. (Laughter.) Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

SEN. CARPER: (Inaudible) – I just want to say, Dr. Groves, we received the letter to the committee, signed by all the former directors for the Census for, gosh, 30 years or so. At first, our first inclination was to be quite favorably impressed by it; on closer inspection, it became suspicious that the signatures all looked very much like Carl Levin’s signature. (Laughter.) But that’s probably just a coincidence; we’ll figure that out when we get into the hearing. Senator Levin, thank you so much.

Welcome one and all. Dr. Groves, your nomination, as you know, comes at a critical time for the Census Bureau. While the agency is not among the largest in the federal government, it nonetheless plays an integral role in the day-to-day operations of our federal government. Most people know that the bureau is the government agency that counts the population every 10 years. Less known is that it regularly provides government, businesses, academia with an updated picture – really, a photograph of who we are – a portrait of who we are – as individuals, as a community and as a nation.

As one of the federal government’s few constitutionally mandated functions, the decennial census determines how many seats each state gets in the U.S. House of Representatives, how hundreds of billions of dollars in federal assistance will be apportioned out to state and local governments. Earlier this week, we had a field hearing in Philadelphia on national constitutional law – I forget the name of where, beautiful place – but one of the things that we learned is not only in that state – in our state, we only have one congressional district, so it’s not hard to figure out how to structure that district, but in Pennsylvania, not only did the census help them to determine how many congressional seats they’ll have, but where those seats will be, how to carve out the state legislative seats, how to, really, to carve out the council seats in the city of Philadelphia. So in terms of the political structure of our states, our communities, this is a lot of input here by the census – great reliance on the census.

Finding and illuminating nearly 300 million individuals in the correct locations is, of course, an extremely daunting task. And every one of those people who signed that letter endorsing your candidacy knows full-well of what I speak. But since I took over as chairman of the sub-committee with oversight over the Census Bureau, I’ve been struck by the complexity of the undertaking and by the amount of staff and resources needed to get this job done, to accurately count the people in our country and to do so in a cost-effective manner. The census requires years of planning, as you know – years of preparation – followed by lightning execution in real-time without any flaws. And looking back at the 2000 Census, it involved the hiring of nearly half a million temporary workers, opening of over 500 local census offices nationwide and following up with 42 million households who had not responded.

Given the sheer magnitude of such an undertaking, a shortcoming in one area can quickly have a domino effect on other operations. For example, a low mail-response rate would increase the non-response follow-up workload, which, in turn, would drive up the bureau’s staffing needs and drive up costs. With each census, the challenge continues to grow in terms of cost and complexity as our population becomes larger, becomes more diverse and increasingly difficult to count. The cost of the 2010 Census has escalated to an estimated \$14 billion, making it the most expensive census that history has seen, at least in this country so far. Put another way, it will

cost our nation an estimated \$100 to count each household in 2010, compared to \$56 in 2000 and \$13 in 1970.

The growing cost of the census at a time when our federal government is facing an unprecedented budget deficit highlights the importance of making sure that each additional dollar spent on our census actually improves the quality of the data. The 2010 Census is approaching rapidly, with Census Day now less than a year away. The bureau has faced many operational and management challenges that have jeopardized its success. These challenges include underfunding by the last administration for outreach to minority communities and the colossal mismanagement and failure of the contract for handheld computers that led to an entire replan of the census very late in the game.

The Census Bureau has taken steps to get the census back on track, but it's imperative that a strong management team is in place so that it can remain on the right track. And I might say, your predecessor – the person who's just stepped down, Dr. Murdock, served for, I think, one year and five days. And he – I think he did yeoman's labor in that one year in trying to get us back on track. And I would just say here – express my appreciation for his leadership and for his service for that 370 days. I barely need to reiterate that while the Census Day only officially lasts one day, its impact is felt over the course of the full decade. An inaccurate census count can be a major setback for millions of Americans already struggling for economic survival.

With that said, I do not have any doubt that Dr. Groves is up to the challenge, and that he commands the respect of both inside and outside the Census Bureau to restore confidence in the agency's competence and integrity – to fully restore. Dr. Groves, you have a strong background in issues related to the census and to statistics, you bring a wealth of experience, as I'm just reminded by Dr. Levin – (chuckles) – Senator Levin – and your service as director of the census (sic). I appreciate your commitment to public service – we appreciate your commitment to public service, and the willingness to help the bureau navigate through such challenging times.

If there were other members here, I would recognize them for their opening statements at this point, but since no members have arrived yet, I'm going to – let's see, here. I understand, Dr. Groves, that you filed responses to the biographical and financial questionnaire. I actually read through most of it. And you've done a lot of research and writing, my lord! You've also answered the pre-hearing questions submitted by the committee. I read most of those, too. I don't know how long it took to answer; I know it took a long time to read. But I thought we asked a lot of good questions and I thought your answers were actually quite good.

In addition, your financial statements have been reviewed by the Office of Government Ethics. Without objection, the information will be made a part of the hearing record. Financial data, however, will remain far from public inspection in the committees' offices. Now, the committee rules require that all witnesses at nomination hearings give their testimony under oath, and from time to time, we have witnesses before us that are new to the game. They're not required to be testifying under oath. But I'll just kid them and say, well, normally we don't swear in our witnesses, but you look pretty questionable, my friend, and – (laughter) – so I'll ask you to take this oath. In your case, you don't look that questionable, but the rules of the

committee require us to administer this oath, and I'm going to ask you to stand and raise your right hand, please.

Do you swear that the testimony you're about to give to the committee will be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God? Thank you very much. You can be seated. And with that said, Dr. Groves, please proceed with any opening statement that you have. And I had a chance to meet some members of your family and others who have come with you as special guests, and feel free as you begin and end your statement, to introduce them to. And as a father with two sons, I'm – one of whom came home from college last night – I'm delighted that one of your boys was able to join you, as well.

ROBERT GROVES: Thank you, Senator. Indeed, I would like to begin, I think, by introducing some of my guests. Behind me is my wife, Cynthia, who's the president of a Washington-based consulting firm specializing in retail real estate and financial markets. I thank her deeply for her love and support throughout our 39-year marriage. Next to her is my son, Andrew, who is completing his freshman year at Northwestern and in the famous integrated science program at the university. We're very proud of him.

We are missing our son, Christopher, who is a senior at Purdue, and is on his way to becoming one of the world's best flight instructors and commercial pilots. Behind – next to Andrew – well, let me go behind, first, to other parts of my family – my sister Carolyn – Carrie – and her husband –

SEN. CARPER: As your names are called, would you just raise your hand, please? Thank you.

(Laughter.)

MR. GROVES: (Chuckles.) They constitute the Vermont delegation. (Laughter.) Next to Carrie is my younger sister, Joan, and their son, Russell – the Pennsylvania delegation. But these are my family members, but I actually have another family – my intellectual and research family – and Cathy Thibault, who is next to Andrew, is the assistant director at the Michigan Survey Research Center. And Carla Kish, who is there, is the daughter of Leslie Kish, one of my great mentors. And I know he is here today – I feel his presence. And out in the audience are, scattered throughout, various faculty members and Ph.D. students from the joint program on survey methodology located here at Maryland. So this collectivity – my family and my research network – is really the joy of my existence, and I thank them all for being here.

I'd also like to thank you, Mr. Chairman. We had a wonderful meeting in your offices. I'm very thankful for how gracious you were with your time. And you and your staff – the staff of the entire committee – made me feel very welcome and respected. I appreciate that. I especially enjoyed meeting with this group of staffers behind you last Friday in an extended meeting, and it was very useful for me to –

SEN. CARPER: How did they do?

MR. GROVES: They did very well. We had a good time, I thought.

SEN. CARPER: Well, they said you did, okay, too.

(Laughter.)

MR. GROVES: Well, that's good. I feel very good about working with this committee and I hope we have a wonderful relationship, should I be confirmed. Let me begin my more formal remarks, and I have – what I'd like to do is give you a subset – a short subset – of the material I've presented the committee, and I hope the rest could be entered into the record. First, I want to –

SEN. CARPER: It will be entered without objection.

MR. GROVES: Thank you, sir. I want to thank President Obama for nominating me to this position. It is a singular honor to be asked to serve the public in this role. Mr. Chairman, I want to talk very, very briefly, I promise, about four topics. One is the necessary nonpartisan nature of the federal statistical system, two is the inherent scientific nature of government statistics, three is the management of large-scale scientific organization, and four is the intersection of legal and statistical perspectives on the decennial census.

First, why does the country need a federal statistical system independent of partisan politics? I firmly believe that a key attribute of a democracy is an informed citizenry. Throughout the world, government statistical agencies are one source of such information, and there are two key attributes of this information that are of key importance. One is credibility and the other is accuracy. If the information is believed to be slanted by partisan influence, the credibility of the statistics is destroyed. And once destroyed, public trust cannot be easily or quickly restored. I'm pursuing this post because I believe strongly that this country needs an objective, nonpartisan and professional Census Bureau, and if confirmed, I promise to give my full energy towards that end.

Second, the inherent scientific nature of government statistics. The credibility of government statistics also depends on their accuracy. My research career has been devoted to the improvement of the quality and cost properties of sample surveys and censuses, and I've learned something in that career. And that is that good scientific measurement of a dynamic population requires continuous research and development. I want the Census Bureau to be a leader in such developments.

Science, and a scientific organization, must be creative, transparent, self-critical, open to new ideas and wise in grasping ultimate success from intermediate failures. The director of a federal statistical agency must be free to speak on scientific matters, unfettered by political influences. If confirmed, I intend to do so.

Three, the management of large-scale scientific organizations. I know full well that right now, as I speak, the talented staff of the Census Bureau are working night and day to ensure the best 2010 Census possible. They need a strong leader that supports them and appreciates their

work. I will work towards that end with the executive team already assembled on the 2010 Census, but I'll be quick to seek advice and counsel from the brightest minds in the country.

And I promise to be transparent in these activities, with respect to the many stakeholders of the census. Beyond the decennial, the Census Bureau has over 12,000 staff members engaged in providing key economic and social indicators, most important to the country at this time of economic difficulty. All of these efforts face ongoing scientific issues of measurement and estimation, and I look forward to that challenge.

Fourth and finally, the intersection of the legal and the statistical on the decennial census. The U.S. Constitution specifies a decennial census in the manner that Congress shall, by law, direct. Congress delegates to the secretary of commerce, through Title XIII, the authority to conduct the census. The Census Bureau director performs duties specified by law and orders of the secretary. Further, the Supreme Court has ruled on matters affecting the census, most notably the banning of the use of statistical adjustment for reapportionment use. Thus, all three branches of government play roles in the decennial census, but Congress is granted the explicit, primary responsibility in the Constitution.

Mr. Chairman, I understand this. I fully agree with Secretary Locke's testimony that statistical adjustment of the census is eliminated as an option for reapportionment, and further, that statistical adjustment will not be used for redistricting. But there's also a science side of the job of the Census Bureau. Congress, through this committee and others, has consistently demanded innovation and increased accuracy and efficiency of the census. My job, as I see it, is to constantly search for improvements in the ways censuses and surveys are conducted.

When the Census Bureau discovers such tools to improve, say, the decennial census, then I believe it's the obligation of the Census Bureau to describe these tools to the secretary, to this committee, to Congress more widely and to the scientific community. Given the constitutional responsibility of Congress, transparency and public comment are required for any acceptable change in the decennial census. Mr. Chairman, these are my remarks. I especially look forward to working with this committee throughout the decade to ensure the strongest Census Bureau the country can produce.

SEN. CARPER: Dr. Groves, thank you very much for your testimony. We've been joined by my friend, Senator Dan Akaka – Daniel Akaka – beloved by his colleagues in the United States Senate. Great to see you again, and I'm delighted that you could join us this morning. Well, the Senate is in session today, but we have no votes today, and as a result, many of our colleagues have returned to their home states.

And I'm delighted that – it's easy for me to go home – it takes, you know, 90 minutes on the train to get home to Delaware at night. I go back and forth almost every night. But it's a little longer train ride to Hawaii – (laughter) – for Senator Akaka. But I'm delighted he's here. Senator Akaka, do you have any comments you'd like to make? Please feel free and then we'll start asking some questions.

SENATOR DANIEL AKAKA (D-HI): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I thank you for your leadership in many areas, and this one in particular. And I'm very impressed with our nominee that we're considering at this time. And I want to congratulate you, Mr. Groves, on your nomination. And I want to also welcome your family, as well – Cynthia, your wife, and your son, who's here, too. And I understand Christopher is not here; he's working at school. And also, your friends and – I should say supporters – who are here to help you. And so welcome to all of you to this committee.

I want to tell you that I was very impressed with you at our meeting that we've had, and it was a good meeting, because we talked about many other things besides the census. And I want you to know that I enjoyed the discussion – that discussion. With the census right around the corner, the Census Bureau must have strong leadership. And from your statement, you're so humble to say that you'll continue to strive to do the best you can, and that's really, really great. And I'm glad you raised what we call the big E, standing for efficiency, and to strive, using all your resources, including personnel and stakeholders and others, to bring that about.

And the census provides critical information, as you stated, that guides Congress's public policy decisions on many topics. And it is clear that you have a solid understanding of the challenges facing the census, and that's why I use the word – I'm impressed with you. But given these challenges, I hope you'll focus on strengthening management at the bureau. In particular, a well-managed organization must invest in its workforce in order to meet its mission.

And mentioning workforce, I hope you'll bring that workforce up to its ultimate strength, and to get the proper people in there and to fill all the vacancies there are. And also, if you consider, in strengthening research, that's another area that needs personnel as well. And I hope you'll make it a priority to provide to those employees the necessary support, as you've indicated. So without question, you are well-qualified to provide the leadership for the Census Bureau and its needs, and I look forward to working with you and the committee and Chairman Carper, as well. Thank you very much for giving me time, here.

SEN. CARPER: Senator Akaka, thank you so much, and thanks for your kind words. Let me just start off with a first question, and I could start talking with you about undercount, overcount. You have two sons; my wife and I have two sons. Your boys are 19 and 21; our boys are 19 and 20. Our youngest boy just came home last night from a school – he goes to school in Virginia – and our other son is a junior who goes to school up in the Boston area.

I don't want to give your sons any ideas, but my big boy and his best friends from college are going to have a summer job this summer in Cupertino, California, working for Apple. And in about a week from now – actually, less than a week from now – my two sons and the best friend of my older son are going to literally drive my like-new 2001 Chrysler Town & Country Minivan from Boston to California, to the Bay Area, for a road trip, probably, of a lifetime. (Laughter.) And I see your son smiling, but Andy, I don't want to give you ideas, but I think they're going to have quite an adventure, quite an adventure.

I mention them because, when you think about the overcount that occurs – the people who we count twice – oftentimes, we count twice the people who have children in college, who

go away and don't live at home, and they live in another part of the state or another state altogether. Or they may, as in the case of our older son this summer, living on the other side of the country and working there. I think of my own life as an undergraduate at Ohio State. I was a Navy ROTC midshipman, and each summer we'd head off and, you know, learn to fly airplanes and be on ships and submarines and aircraft carriers.

And it wasn't a stay-at-home situation, but the mobility that we have today with the young people is really remarkable. They travel around the state, around the country and really, around the world, and it's hard enough for us to keep track of them, and I'm sure, a challenge for the Census Bureau to do that as well. But I'm told that an overcount that occurs, a lot of times, with young people in college – very mobile, going to school, working, traveling throughout the world. And trying to be able to count them is a challenge.

I also understand that – Delaware is a state where we have beautiful beaches – rivaling those of Hawaii, I'm told, although we don't have as many of them. (Laughter.) But we have a lot of people who come to Delaware for tourism, and I'm sure they come to Hawaii for tourism. We have a lot of folks with, perhaps, summer homes, year-round homes, and second homes in places like Dewey Beach, Rehoboth Beach, Bethany Beach and other places. And we – there's a propensity to count people who have second homes or vacation homes, maybe, twice, at their primary residence and at their second residences as well.

And that's, I'm told, how we end up with overcounts. We also end up with undercounts, and I thought your responses to some of the questions that were raised about undercounts and why that occurs – why is it so difficult to get some segments of our society to respond to the request to be counted, and providing basic information about their families – why that's so difficult. I'm going to ask you to take a couple of minutes, though, and just going back and revisiting and sharing with us again your thoughts on why is it so difficult to get some segments of our population to respond and to be counted and to provide information that's sought by the census. Why is that so difficult?

MR. GROVES: Thank you, Senator. It's one of the most fundamental and important questions that faces the Census Bureau, and indeed, statistical agencies around the world. We know some things, I think, from research that have gone on over the past decades. There appear to be influences on participation in censuses that are rather stable. So the most difficult to count are routinely those folks whose connection to a single household is ambiguous.

So even though, in some sense, censuses around the world ask a very simple question – who lives here – the answer to the question is complicated for those who live in multiple homes at different parts of the – this includes young men with multiple connections to households, it includes children of divorced parents, who have child custody-sharing arrangements where the children live in one household for a few days of the week and others for other.

It includes, unfortunately, groups that are isolated from the larger society – they don't feel themselves part of the society. It includes people whose primary language is not English. Languages – especially isolated language groups – when asked to participate, need to be asked in ways that they understand. And it includes – and this is an area of great concern for this country

right now, I think – it includes households that are doubled-up – households where there are multiple families in the household, in a sense, in a temporary way, but ambiguously temporary. So these are causes that appear to be prevalent throughout the world. It's an issue that every census-taking operation faces. And the solutions are not simple, on these. But they are the challenge that we face.

SEN. CARPER: All right, thank you. We've been joined by Senator Collins, who's the ranking Republican on our full committee. I'm delighted that she's here, and let me just ask, maybe, a follow-up question, if I can, and I'll turn it over to Senator Akaka for questions and then to Senator Collins for a statement, if she'd like to make, and questions as well.

Sort of following up on your response, explain to us some of the approaches that we use, some of the techniques that we use in the census to be able to cut through all those difficulties, all those challenges, and actually get, as best we can, an accurate count. Maybe, what have we learned over the years, and how will we see those lessons demonstrated in the census that will begin shortly?

MR. GROVES: Well, there are solutions to some of these. The solutions are the result of the research efforts, partly at the Census Bureau and partly at other organizations. So we know very simple things work. Calling back on a house that didn't return the form is an enormously successful act. It's expensive, but it's successful. I think we know from other efforts that altering the modes of data collection – that some people like to respond with a face-to-face enumerator right in their home. They feel safe about that; they understand that. Other people would prefer to respond in the privacy of a self-administered questionnaire or a Web-based instrument. So tailoring methods to sub-populations is key.

The other thing that's key – and this has to do with the outreach that's going on now – is that groups cannot believe that their participation in the census can harm them. If they think that participating in the census could harm them in some way, then that's a big deterrent to their participation. So how do we counteract that? It's through the outreach and working with groups that are trusted spokesmen – leaders – in the sub-groups of the population that we can break that misconception about what a census is.

SEN. CARPER: I don't know if, in the past, presidents have ever been involved in calling on the American people to stand up and be counted and to be responsive to the census. When you talk about the segments of our population that are reluctant to respond, I think in some instances, they may be moved to be more responsive – to participate more fully – with the appropriate appeal from our president, or even from Mrs. Obama. Do we have any experience with that sort of thing, to your knowledge?

MR. GROVES: Well, I think it – history has shown us that, if censuses can mobilize leaders of all sorts – leaders at the local, the state, the regional level, the national level – in all sectors of the society – it's key. Each of those leaders has influence over different groups. I think presidents in the past have been effective spokesmen for encouraging participation among groups that they can touch through their remarks.

SEN. CARPER: All right, thank you. Normally, Dr. Groves, we ask three questions – always the same three questions that are asked of our witnesses and those who are standing for confirmation. And I’m going to ask those three questions and then call on Senator Akaka for his questions. Is there anything that you’re aware of in your background that might present a conflict of interest with the duties of the office to which you’ve been nominated?

MR. GROVES: No.

SEN. CARPER: All right. Do you know of anything, personal or otherwise, that would prevent you from fully and honorably discharging the responsibilities of the office to which you’ve been nominated?

MR. GROVES: No.

SEN. CARPER: And do you agree, without reservation, to respond to any reasonable summons to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of Congress, if you are confirmed?

MR. GROVES: Yes, I do, Mr. Chairman.

SEN. CARPER: All right. Senator Akaka?

SEN. AKAKA: Thank you –

SEN. CARPER: I thought he did a good job answering those three questions; what do you think? (Laughter.) Go to the next level.

SEN. AKAKA: Well, thank you. Mr. Groves, I didn’t mention your son that’s here, and his name is Andrew. I just want to welcome Andrew, too, with the family. As I mentioned to you in our chat, I was concerned about COLA. And in Hawaii, in Alaska, and also in the territories, the federal employees receive COLA, or a cost-of-living allowance, instead of locality pay. And in most of Hawaii, the COLA rate is 25 percent of an employee’s basic pay. And what I want to mention is that it has come to my attention that the regional office has decided to deny COLA for temporary employees hired in Hawaii for the 2010 Census.

During these difficult times, of course, denying COLA can have a significant impact on workers’ economic security. Will you commit to review the decision and to address any inequity in the treatment of temporary employees in Hawaii and other COLA areas, versus other parts of the United States?

MR. GROVES: Well, thank you, Senator. At our lovely meeting in your offices a few days ago, this was the first I learned about this. I understand your concern on this issue. I don’t know much about it, frankly. I do promise you that I will find out about this, if confirmed, as quickly as I can, and address the issue.

SEN. AKAKA: Well, thank you for that. Mr. Groves, the federal government is facing major human capital challenges. Approximately one-third of the federal workforce will be eligible to retire within the next five years, and you estimate that 45 percent of current census employees will be eligible to retire next year. You have particularly emphasized the Census Bureau's need to recruit employees skilled in statistics and research methods, which is really your area. What steps will you take to ensure that the bureau is able to recruit and train workers with the technical background needed to replace these retirees?

MR. GROVES: Well, Senator, I know we share this concern. And we had a lovely talk about how important this is. I'm terribly worried about this problem. It is not a problem only of the Census Bureau, but of the entire federal statistical system. So, actually, solving it for the Census Bureau doesn't solve it very long because other areas need help.

It is a large problem, because on my visits to college campuses – and I'm sure you, in your role, have done similar things – if you visit the departments that are teaching quantitative sciences, the ratio of American citizens to foreign, international students is such that you have little hope that this problem can be solved with the current pipeline of students, who are currently U.S. citizens, coming into the system.

Secondly, the number of programs in the country training people that have the requisite skills for the Census Bureau is way below the need. So it's not a simple problem. It's a problem that I think needs help with regard to hiring restrictions. I note, with great interest, that the Public Health Service has a class of employee where citizenship requirements are not in place. They are advanced scientific workers and doing wonderful work for the country. I also think that working with this committee – it's role is perfectly situated to be useful in this.

I think there's a partnership that's required with universities and the federal statistical system that doesn't exist. So it's a many-faceted problem; it's not a simple problem that would have been solved before. But I think it's a critical problem to work on so that 10 years from now, whoever is sitting here can talk about a much stronger Census Bureau with you.

SEN. AKAKA: Mr. Groves, I'm glad you mentioned, in particular, the universities and colleges and even community colleges. And you mentioned developing pipelines into university programs in order to reach the talent pool with these skills; developing pipelines into pools of talented candidates is very important. Would you elaborate on the steps that you would take to foster these relationships with the colleges and the universities?

MR. GROVES: Well, I think it does, Senator, require outreach from the federal statistical system, and I think it's outreach at multiple levels. It's been my experience that programs that serve these kinds of needs are understood by presidents of universities – they're understood by some deans – they're often opposed by individual faculty members, because they're interdisciplinary programs. And that's what the world needs, and we need to foster the creation of those. So I think it's a pretty high level of communication.

SEN. AKAKA: Finally, because my time is almost up, I've been looking at the area of diversity, you know, within the federal government, and so let me quickly just ask you, how do

you plan to work with the department's chief human capital officer to improve diversity in the Census Bureau?

MR. GROVES: Well, I'll work with that role, but with also a lot of other roles – and that's a big outreach problem, too, to get the pipeline – to get contacts with colleges that serve diverse student populations is key. The role of this in the Census Bureau is paramount. We study a diverse population; if we don't have a diverse staff, we don't understand that diverse population. So the will is here, I can assure you, Senator, and I'll work in various ways – I hope to work with this committee and find ideas and ways that you have that may help us.

SEN. AKAKA: Well, thank you so much for your responses, and let me finally say – and to give you a warning that Senator Voinovich is passionate about human capital, and he will work diligently with you in this area and so will I. So wish you well in your new position. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SEN. CARPER: I would just observe that Senator Voinovich is passionate about his wife of many years, his children, his grandchildren, but what he's really passionate about is human capital. (Chuckles.) He is on-message, and if you spend any time with him, you know what I mean. We're fortunate that we've been joined by the senior Republican member of this committee. She and Senator Lieberman take turns chairing the committee, and they work to have a great partnership. And we're fortunate for that. I'm delighted that she's here, and thank you for joining us. And you're welcome to make an opening statement if you wish, and to begin your questions, thank you.

SEN. COLLINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll spare the committee my opening statement, although it's eloquent and brilliant and insightful. (Laughter.) I will instead submit that for the record. I do, however, have a series of questions for our nominee, and I want to start by saying, Dr. Groves, that I very much appreciated the discussion that we had at my office. The topics I'm going to bring up today are redundant, in the sense that we've discussed them in my office, but I do believe that they are sufficiently important that they need to be part of this hearing record.

First, let me say that I was very pleased to see that you started your written statement off with what I think is the most important issue, and that is your statement that we need a federal statistical system – a census – that is independent of partisan politics. You made a very strong statement that this country needs an objective, nonpartisan, professional Census Bureau. And as you know from our previous discussion, there's been a lot of concern about the White House's possible interest in affecting or in otherwise influencing inappropriately the census. And I appreciate the commitment you've given. But let me follow up by asking you, what specific steps will you take – what safeguards will you put in place – to ensure that the next census – the 2010 Decennial Census – is free from political influence from either side of the aisle?

MR. GROVES: Thank you, Senator, and thank you for your time that day when we met. That was very helpful. I think one answer to this is transparency. Sunshine – doing one's work in an open environment, having an ongoing dialogue with all of the stakeholders is one way to insulate the Census Bureau from that political partisanship.

The second thing is leadership. I truly believe that the role of the director of the Census Bureau during these next few years must be such that there's absolutely certainty that I would speak out, I would first work to prevent such interference quietly, but if I failed at that, I must, as a government statistician, in my belief, talk about this. And I believe transparency is a very powerful antidote to attempts for partisan influence.

SEN. COLLINS: Would you be prepared to resign if you were asked or pressured to do something, to take some action, to satisfy a political concern?

MR. GROVES: More than that, Senator, if I resign, I promise you today that after I resign, I will be active in stopping the abuse from outside the system.

SEN. COLLINS: Thank you, I very much appreciate that. In that regard, and your responses to Senator Carper and in your responses to the pre-hearing questions, you indicated a willingness to respond to requests for information from this committee. I'd be remiss in my duties as the ranking member if I did not ask you whether or not you're willing to treat requests from the chairman of the committee and the sub-committee of jurisdiction and the ranking members of the committee and sub-committees equally.

MR. GROVES: I'd be happy to do so, Senator, and I hope to establish with you and your colleagues a working relationship, that the requests are pretty free-flowing.

SEN. COLLINS: Fortunately, with this committee and its bipartisan approach, it's extremely rare for it not to be a bipartisan request for information, so I actually do not anticipate this being a problem, but one never knows. The makeup of the committee could change in the future. I want to move to another issue that has been extremely controversial and that is the issue of sampling. The Constitution clearly requires the government to conduct an actual enumeration of the population every 10 years. And the Supreme Court has ruled – I believe it was in 1999 – that sampling cannot be used for apportionment of House seats.

There is, however, some question over whether sampling could be used for redistricting and for the allocation of federal funds. Obviously, the reason this is important is the results of the census significantly affect both the allocation of federal resources and political power, ultimately. Will you advocate for the statistical adjustment or use of sampling during the 2010 Census?

MR. GROVES: No, Senator.

SEN. COLLINS: Will you advocate for statistical adjustment or the use of sampling during the 2020 Census, because obviously, the practical reality is, you probably couldn't use sampling for 2010 at this late date, anyway, because that would require planning, I assume.

MR. GROVES: As I said in my questionnaire, I have no plans to do that for 2020.

SEN. COLLINS: Thank you. I want to turn to another issue, and again, we discussed this one as well. As you know, the Census Bureau has encountered numerous difficulties with its information technology investments. Senator Carper and Senator Coburn have held many hearings on this. And it's really been appalling. After spending literally billions of dollars and much time, the Census Bureau scrapped its plans to use handheld computer technology for non-response follow-up, due to significant performance problems and the loss of confidence in its contractor.

So now, here we are going into the 2010 Census and it's going to be done the old, out-of-date way, using paper and pencil. That's extraordinary in this Information Age, where all of us have handheld devices and BlackBerrys and all sorts of computer applications, that the census is going back to using pen and pad, essentially. This management has added an estimated \$2 to \$3 billion on top of the already-expensive census cost that is more than \$11 billion. What steps will you take to both bring the census into the 21st century – or even the 20th century would be fine – (laughter) – and also to ensure that there's better management of IT contracts by the bureau?

MR. GROVES: Thank you, Senator. This is an important issue, and I know you care, and other members care, deeply about this. Looking forward, I think various things. Part of it, with regard to IT, is a research and development function; part of it is a management function. Let me speak to those separately. On the research and development, it seems clear in my part of the IT world, in large-scale surveys, that successful software and hardware development has certain ingredients to it.

One is that the user is involved at the beginning and at the end and at the middle – that the old-fashioned way of building big IT systems where people spend a year or so writing out specifications and then the computer scientists go away and program those and then come back with a device – that doesn't seem as efficient as constant involvement of user orientation, so that little pieces of the system are built, and when the piece isn't desirable, you throw it away and you build another little piece and gradually build the system. That appears to be successful over and over again. So one thing is, how do you get the environment to get the users working with the computer professionals to make this happen? And that's, I would submit, the setting of a culture, that innovation through IT is part of the culture.

The second thing is management. And on the management side, what I've seen – I don't know the details of the FDCA failure as well as you may, Senator, but looking forward, I do see the ingredients of success on the management side. One has to do with the leadership of oversight of contracts being there a lot, and all the time, as it were, and cycling back and forth between the details of a system and the big picture. So leadership at the census can't walk away from these contracts and delegate them down to other levels. The leadership has to be involved throughout, and I think that's the signal source of success.

SEN. COLLINS: Thank you very much, Dr. Groves. I do want to say that I'm very satisfied with your answers to the questions that I posed on political interference, on the sampling issue and on the management of the Bureau. So thank you for your willingness to serve and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SEN. CARPER: Not at all, thank you so much. And I think we'll just make your statement, which you didn't give verbally – we'll just make that a part of the record.

SEN. COLLINS: Thank you.

SEN. CARPER: I want to follow up on the questioning that – the line of questioning that Senator Collins was pursuing just at the end of her comments. But on the issue of IT projects, it's not just the Census Bureau that struggles with these; it's all parts of federal government, almost all, large and small. At state government, we had the same problem when I was governor of my state and we face these difficulties at all levels of government, and frankly, truth-be-known, in the private sector, too. These are tough things to deal with and to get right.

You mentioned, in response to Senator Collins's question, you talked about the management of the projects, in this case from the federal side, from the Census Bureau side. And one of the things that we have learned in the course of the hearings that Senator Coburn and I have held is that sometimes, the people who are in charge of managing these projects are not especially well-qualified or prepared to do that. And I would just lay that at your feet. We heard it again as recently as this week.

A second problem that we face is, apparently, at the beginning of many of these projects, we don't – the agency doesn't clearly say this is what our needs are, and what we call "need-creep" comes along and we continue to change the nature of what we're looking for a contractor to provide. And the third – a third piece is a reliance on what we call cost-plus contracts instead of a fixed-price contract. And I would suggest that we've heard that not just once, but those three items keep coming back to us again and again and again. I'm going to ask you, you've already talked a little bit about the management side, but let me just ask you to stick to this for a bit longer, because a big part of the problem that we got into with the Census Bureau has been our inability to manage well a large technology contract.

MR. GROVES: Thank you, Senator. I have a couple comments that I think are relevant to your points. Let's take the scope-creep one. I have seen several software development projects that haven't managed that part of the task well, and what usually happens is, for very benign reasons, late in the game, a set of users say, oh the specifications I gave you weren't exactly what we wanted; we wanted some other thing. And without the management discipline to set those priorities, then things get out of control.

The other thing I've noticed is on the programming/software development side, that without a constant interaction between users and producers of large software systems, the producers – the programmers – will get fascinated with a very tough technical problem without getting user input about how important the solution to that problem is, in the overall scheme of things. And so many times, software development gets fixated on what is really a little part of the problem, and if users were at the table, they could say to those programmers, gee, you know, it's not that important, let's drop that. If it's that hard to solve, we'll give that up. And so that constant dialogue is key for cost control and scope control, I think.

SEN. CARPER: I want to go back to a point I raised earlier on, with respect to undercount – overcount and undercount – and spend a little bit more time talking about efforts that can reduce the undercount. Thank you. And especially efforts that can reduce the need to go back and actually call on residents to try to find out who lives there and obtain some basic information about the residents and the family.

In our field hearing in Philadelphia on Monday, the mayor of Philadelphia was among the witnesses and the mayor of Wilmington, Delaware, was among our witnesses. And they spoke of the need for partnerships, the need for a strong media campaign to raise awareness for the census, to raise the importance, to the citizenry, of why it was important to be counted and what the ramifications are for – whether it's Philadelphia or Wilmington, Pennsylvania or Delaware or other states – why it's important that the people be counted.

The mayor of Philadelphia indicated the cost lost to Philadelphia and Pennsylvania for every person not counted was actually very large – surprisingly large – almost hard to believe. But talk to us about what you and what the Census Bureau can do to nurture, to further the work of partnerships and to also put together, if you will, a campaign to raise awareness – a compelling campaign – that will cause some of the hardest-to-count members of our society to want to be counted – actually to want to be counted – and to respond not just to the person that finally comes and knocks at their door for the second or third time to find them, but will respond the first time out. What can we do and how can we better ensure that that happens?

MR. GROVES: Well, the first thing to note is that the Census Bureau's own evaluation in 2000, I think, is pertinent to this discussion, because it's pretty clear that awareness itself is actually a big driver for participation. That's actually good news, if you think about it. So then the question is, how do you get awareness that is effective? And again, I think, in 2000, there were over 100,000 partnerships that the Census Bureau formed at all levels. These were groups that were government-based, nonprofit-based, social groups, religious groups and so on.

The key ingredient seems clear both from the U.S. experience and experience in other diverse societies: The outreach is most effectively and cheaply done when the message is delivered by a messenger who is a trusted spokesman for the group. And in a diverse society, that's not one spokesman; that's many, many spokesmen. And it appears that local leaders play an important role in this. So the outreach that needs to be done effectively – and this is not just in the U.S. I think that this is a worldwide phenomenon – has to be a grassroots one, almost. And that's a major campaign that has to be waged successfully.

SEN. CARPER: Give us some examples of places where you've seen it done well, both in creating the partnerships, putting together the message through any different number of modes – you know, my sons communicate a lot differently than I do. I still read the newspaper; they get their news over the Internet. For Mother's Day, I gave my wife some gifts, including a Mother's Day card that I picked up at a local store.

My oldest son put together, over the Internet, with photos from his files of photos and unbelievable Mother's Day card that had, like, photos of him and his brother, and even of their father, on the front of the card, with a real special, personalized message on the inside that he

did, I think, with Hallmark. And Hallmark actually mailed the card to my wife. She was pretty amazed with it. So was I. Generations, I'm sure – well, maybe you're as with-it as your sons are, I don't know, but mine are well ahead of me. But, given the way that we communicate, the messages that we use, and really the medium that we use too, how do we act in response to those changes?

MR. GROVES: No, I think your question has the implied answer. And the ingredients of success are identifying the subgroups that have different media that they choose to look at and have different languages that they communicate with. I don't mean basic languages but different terms and ways of communicating. So the message has to be tailored, and in diverse countries around the world – Australia has a great example of dealing with the aborigines, in communicating a separate message that's important to that group.

I can't wait upon – if confirmed – to learn about the media campaign that is being designed right now. I think the key to the success of that, as we've seen over and over again, is the customization of message and medium.

SEN. CARPER: I'll just follow up on this and then yield to Senator Akaka. My last year or so of governor of Delaware – states were involved in a big lawsuit against the tobacco industry – states won. And we ended up as a result of the lawsuit a large amount of money was provided to create a foundation later called the American Legacy Foundation who's job it was to be able to message – particularly to young people – to discourage them from ever starting to use tobacco, and if they were, to stop.

We decided that the people – I was the sounding vice chairman; Chris Gregoire was attorney general of the state of Washington, now governor of Washington, was the founding chair. And we decided that in order to be able to prepare the message to the young people across the country, it was probably best if general – then General Gregoire and myself not do the work.

In fact the people on our board – however gifted they were – we probably weren't up to it – and we looked around the country and we hired a lot of very good agencies to help us to develop the message and to figure out how to convey the message. And they decided they weren't up to it as well, but they found a lot of young people around the country that they recruited to help in both the message and the delivery of the message, people from all different walks of life.

The American Legacy Foundation, I'm told, was one of the most successful such in issues that we've done in terms of changing public perception, in this case the use of tobacco – especially with young people. Interestingly enough, I almost never saw the television commercials; I almost never heard the radio commercials; I didn't see the stuff that was out on the Internet.

But it was out there. And it was delivered in ways that young people, like my kids, would see it – and not necessarily their parents, hugely successful.

I met with somebody in California recently, he talked to me about the meth program – there is a program to help discourage use of methamphetamines in Montana. And he said we basically – on the American Legacy model – had enormous success in their prevention efforts in Montana with the use of methamphetamines and the perception by young people.

How do we take that message and use that in conjunction with – or that experience – those two experiences and use them in conjunction with the census?

MR. GROVES: Yeah, I think the finding alternative media to communicate is key, and tailoring it to the individual audience. The content of the message has to be different for different groups. The goal of the message has to be the same – but how it's delivered and how it's framed needs to be tailored to the individual groups, and I'm anxious to see whether that same sort of thinking applies in the current work at the bureau.

SEN. CARPER: We opened our – I'll just add this and I'll stop – but we opened our hearing in Philadelphia on Monday with a wonderful video prepared by the Census Bureau and it was pictures of families, people from all walks of life, different ethnic backgrounds – beautifully photographed and choreographed, a wonderful compelling message that when we take the census, we really take a portrait, or make a portrait of America. I loved it. That was wonderful.

That's not going to be the effective – that will get a lot of people to want to participate, but not some of the people we most need to participate, from the hardest – and I would just ask us to keep that in mind. Senator Akaka.

SEN. AKAKA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Groves, I want to return to research because I know that is an important part of the Census Bureau that you've worked with and that you want to develop. And we know that's essential for the bureau to have an active research program to improve survey design, address challenges that are a result of rapidly changing society and maintain the most efficient research methods and technologies.

In the past, the bureau has – I would say significantly decreased the funding for its research and development. And you – I think you realize that as well. And in our brief discussion, I learned of your interest in creating a dedicated research arm within the Census Bureau.

My question to you is, how do you plan to increase research and development at the bureau? And what would you have the research program focus on?

MR. GROVES: Thank you, Senator. Maybe I should first note why do you need research at the Census Bureau. My belief is that the current approaches for measuring businesses and individuals through survey methods and census methods won't continue to work. If the technology of those methods is completely stable, fixed in time, ossified – there won't be a successful set of statistics in the future.

So innovation is needed. How do you innovate? Well, you innovate through trying alternative ideas and the structured way of trying alternative ideas is something we call research and science. So that's the chain that we have to begin.

Now, how do you do this? One is to note that many opportunities for innovation don't necessarily demand increases in budget. They are efficiencies that can be introduced through innovation. And those are important to find out, to sniff out very quickly because in these times with constrained budgets, the invention of research might immediately be opposed by saying, well, that's going to increase our budgets. How will we do our normal work if we're also going to pay these researchers?

So innovation can pay for itself. I believe that; I've seen it happen. We've created it at various times in my own experience. We also need partnerships. Not all research innovation will come from inside the Census Bureau. There is a vibrant sector outside of the Census Bureau inventing new measurement techniques right now, and there ought to be partnerships between the Census Bureau and that – it should be an open process.

And so I am terribly interested in figuring out ways of building those partnerships within the current constraints of a federal agency.

SEN. AKAKA: Yes, and I would realize with you that these research focusing would focus towards achieving the mission of the Census Bureau, and that is getting all the information you need about people and where they are. And so, I was interested in the word you used about uses and how to get down to the uses. And you also mentioned by speaking to a group and its leader that you don't necessarily get down to receiving the kind of information you need from the grassroots, which are the users.

And so, in a sense, all of this is directed towards trying to get all of that information up into the bureau. And so it's a huge challenge. I believe with you that research is an area where we need to continually, dynamically, continue to try to find a better way in getting that grassroots information. And you mentioned transparency – all the right things that need to bring this about.

And I would be interested in knowing your ideas in particular in getting to the users. And the users could be people who don't speak English as well. So there are ethnic groups all over the place, you mentioned spiritual groups as well, and it's going to be a huge challenge to get done, to get this kind of information.

So let me ask you the question: Do you have further comments about how we would try to reach the grassroots?

MR. GROVES: Thanks, Senator. This is a tough problem because of the nature of government statistics. And that is, they are freely given to the society, and many of them are then repackaged by the private sector and sold in different ways to individual clients. So one of the problems of any government statistical agency is identifying the users in order to reach out to them. It sounds odd, but it is true.

The census has a series of state data centers that have effectively outreached – in one manner it would be nice to see those expanded. Some of our users – I think you need a long-run view of this – some of our users are children. And the use of statistics to aid the general quantitative literacy of our country is a wonderful opportunity, I think, for the entire federal statistical system.

Taking advantage of that won't produce immediate dividends. But it will produce a generation that understands things in ways that our generation doesn't. So these are big issues, I agree with you. They can't be solved by the Census Bureau alone. Partnerships are the word that works on all of these things, and the getting statistics in the schools, I think this is an entire statistical system problem that we need to work on.

SEN. AKAKA: I look forward to working with you in this area, and you've spoken about transparency, management. One of the areas to reach the grassroots, of course, is to have personnel in the bureau who can reach there. And of course part of getting them to help them reach that group is training. Training is one of the most important factors in promoting good performance and reaching your mission.

A recent report by the Department of the Inspector General found that census field workers were not consistently following procedures that have been set up. As a matter of fact, the inspector general reported that temporary census field workers were not following these procedures when completing address canvassing operations where workers were sent to verify and correct census maps and addresses. So this is all down in the grass roots.

And so, failing to do that, of course, would impact the reports that you receive. So my question to you is what steps will you take to ensure that the bureau effectively trains their employees and that they are following appropriate census procedure?

MR. GROVES: As you know, Senator, the address canvassing is going on as we speak, and if confirmed this is a very important step in the 2010 Census. It produces the master address file that is the base of the mailing. So training here is very important; training is also important in non-response follow-up.

So it is a key lever that you have as a manager. I'm not briefed on the current training of the address canvassing nor of non-response follow-up. I can tell you that I am personally interested in those things; I find them an interesting thing to worry about as a manager so I will pay attention to those.

SEN. AKAKA: Well, thank you for that. And the reason I ask the question is in our chat I felt that this was an area that you really wanted to get down to the grassroots. So I am very impressed with your responses. Mr. Chairman, I thank you for being so generous with your time, for questioning, and I want to wish you – and I know how important the family is – and wish the family well in supporting what you do for our country.

SEN. CARPER: Senator Akaka, thank you very much, and I want to follow up in his last question, your last questions, and I thought it was an excellent question and one that was brought to our attention on Monday at our field hearing in Philadelphia.

We rely on inspector general reports, in this committee especially we rely on the work of the General Accountability Office; we rely on the work of Office of Management and Budget to help us fare out waste and inefficient use of taxpayer money. And when we got wind of the IG's report – this is the inspector general, I think, for the Department of Commerce – it almost jumped off the page at us. And I would just urge you to familiarize yourself with it and to go to school on it.

And it sent up real alarm signals – it showed what you did for us, and it certainly should for you. So I urge you to bear down on that right away. I have just two more questions that I am going to ask. There will be a number of questions that are going to be submitted for the record, and we'll just ask you to respond to those in a prompt way.

But I just want to ask two more here today. And one of those is, Dr. Groves, if confirmed by the Senate, which I think is likely, you'll be taking command of the census within less than seven months since the beginning of the census year, and less than 11 months from Census Day.

As we know well on this committee the census operations are already well underway, and they have been for some time. In fact it's almost like they never stop – it's sort of like campaigns – campaigns these days unfortunately seem to never stop either.

The last two past census directors was confirmed within two years of Census Day in 2000, and within four months of Census Day in 1990. What extra challenges does this bring, and what if anything other than confirming you quickly should this committee be doing about it?

MR. GROVES: Well, thank you, Senator. As you might imagine, I've given this some thought. It is terribly late; it's not terribly unusual, as you've just noted, unfortunately. The design is fixed for the 2010 Census. I think it must be fixed. So any major changes bring with them so much risk that the benefits would have to be enormous for them to be considered.

I need to establish very quickly and have hoped to call for a risk assessment study that uses the talent inside the bureau and some outside the bureau to help identify pressure points. I need a set of priorities – you know, what are the first things that I need to attend to make the 2010 as successful as possible.

I think I also need to establish a leadership style working jointly with the executive team that's running the census that's one of trust, one that allows us to look at alternative solutions for problems that arise – problems will arise in the 2010 Census. I guarantee you this. It is too large of an endeavor to go completely smoothly. And then at those moments, when there is a problem, we need calm, fast and flexible decisions. And they have to be transparent.

So we need to work with you and other committees in Congress to know so that all of the stakeholders know the status. Look at the options, understand why we choose one option – that

has to be done quickly to be successfully done. So speed is important and flexibility is important and a calmness is important I think in the crisis – and I hope to provide those.

SEN. CARPER: Several months ago we had a panel that included a number of people who worked in censuses before in very senior positions of responsibility. And one of the questions I ask them at the end of the time that they spent with us that day. I said, we still have not gotten a name from the administration, from the Secretary of Commerce, Gary Locke, whom I knew as governor, we worked together as governors; he is a very good person.

And I said to Gary Locke when he was designated, when he was nominated by the president, I happened to run into him the next day, and I said, two words, my friend, two words you need to think about: census director. And I kept running into him, ironically, and every time I'd run into him, I'd say "census director." And when he got confirmed the next day, I called him and I said "census director."

I asked this question to our panel that day, and I would ask it of you as well. The idea of having a census director who in some cases serves one year and five days, in some cases two or three years, four years. It's pretty uneven, and we end up in a situation as we have here today, where our next census director is going to assume the reigns of leadership literally as we begin the census itself.

And your thoughts about whether or not there should be a fixed term – and the House of Repetitive I think has passed legislation that I think would provide for a fixed term of five years, that for a census director, they could be dismissed for cause, but anything short of that, this is a term that we extend before the normal four years of a president's term extends, and could extend from one administration from another.

Your thoughts on whether the proposal that has come out of the House makes sense and your thoughts on whether or not it makes sense for the Census Bureau director to continue to report to the secretary of Commerce – this has been the law for some time.

MR. GROVES: Well, let me not that when the 2010 Census will be over, this country would have experienced five out of the last seven censuses led by a director who was appointed in the year nine or in the year zero. There was one poor fellow appointed weeks before the forms were mailed out.

SEN. CARPER: Who was that, do you remember?

MR. GROVES: I can't remember. I will get back to you on that. So there is a problem. Unless that system is working perfectly I think it's a problem. A fixed term has various meanings, and I think one meaning would be important if one would pursue this. There are fixed terms that float, that are such that you may have four years after the date you take office. And given the way the federal government appointment process works, those often float in time. I think to fix this one problem through a fixed term that it ought to be defined in terms of dates.

So I know that different past Census Bureau directors have slight debates about whether it should be a seven-and-two combination – appointed in year seven or year two – or a six-and-one. Those are minor matters. I think the notion that you have someone in place overlapping the decennial census is a desirable attribute. So it's meritorious of serious discussion, Senator.

SEN. CARPER: All right, thank you. We may want to pursue that and explore that with you further as time goes by. Dr. Groves, much has been made of the notion of sampling for adjustment. Senator Collins, when she was here, discussed with you, as I believe she did in her office in an earlier meeting, issues revolving around sampling. But as you and Secretary Locke have said, the bureau does not have a plan or design and will not use dual-system enumeration to address the 2010 Census.

However, since 1980, I'm told, the bureau has used statistical methods to generate detailed estimates of census undercounts and overcounts, including those of particular ethnic, racial and other groups. The Government Accountability Office says the cost of these efforts in 2000 was about 3 percent of the lifecycle cost of a decennial, which involved quality check interviews with some 314,000 households and comparing the results of those to the census itself. In fact, these report cards on the quality of the census in 1980, 1990 and 2000 are what everyone refers to when they discuss the relative accuracy of each census.

A similar coverage measurement effort is a part of the 2010 design, and I'd just like to ask you explain for us, if you will, how vital this coverage estimate program is in order for the Congress and the nation to evaluate the success of the 2010 decennial and whether, in your view, you believe the current design is robust enough and sufficiently funded to give us a high-quality report card on which we can rely?

MR. GROVES: Let me address the first question about the importance of this. This is key, in my belief, Senator. The obligation of a federal statistical agency is to both produce the best estimates it can and then, in a rare attribute, also tell the public how bad those are and how good those are. We have to do both those things. The effort that you talk about – the CCM – is the second. We have to tell you and we have to tell the American public the good and bad parts of the 2010 Census.

That must be funded at a level that gives quality data on the quality aspects of the census. Your second question, I don't have enough information to answer because I don't know the details of the linkage between the budget of the coverage measurement activities and actually what's going to go on, on the ground.

SEN. CARPER: All right. Well, there are some – as I said earlier – there are some questions they are going to be submitting for follow-up responses and we would – will ask you to writing to respond further to that, if you could. Without objection, the hearing record will remain open until noon tomorrow for the submission of additional statements and questions. I just want to say, again, Senator Akaka has already mentioned this in his comments as well, but we're delighted that you're before us today. That panel – and I may have said this earlier – but the panel that was here a couple of months ago were asking all kinds of questions of people who were steeped in census and statistics.

Among the names – I asked each of them to give me a name or two of somebody who could be Census Bureau director and several of them submitted your name. And so that’s one of the things I always look for when smart people who know the business say this guy or this gal would be really good, that’s something I take note of.

Velvet Johnson, who has worked a lot on this hearing and frankly on these census issues for us for the last year or so has just handed me a note. It says, “Record will be open till the close of business today” – not tomorrow at noon, today. So my colleagues here – staffer forewarned. So in closing, thank you for preparing for this job. I think you’ve been preparing for it for a long time. And I think you’re well-prepared.

As you spoke, I noticed – I watched your wife’s – and her lips barely moved when you spoke. I bet she’s pretty good at that. (Laughter.) And I’ve seen that happen in other cases, but that she’s unusually good at that – and I just want to say to you, Ms. Groves, thank you for being here, and not just standing behind your man, but actually being willing to share him with us in this instance as well as others.

To Andrew and to Christopher, who is not here, you’ve done a good job raising your dad. (Laughter.) And we’re grateful for the time and effort you’ve put into that. And to others that are here – sisters or whoever, members of the extended family, thank you for joining us today and for your support of this nominee. Our intent is to be able to try to move this nomination through committee next week. We are going to have a one-week recess for Memorial Day. And during – we’d like to get this nomination out of committee.

I don’t know, is it possible you could actually get this through the Senate? Maybe we’ll get this through the Senate. It’s sometimes hard to get 51 senators to agree that if I offered a resolution that today is Friday, I’m not sure I could get 51 votes for that. But hopefully we’ll be able to move this nomination because it’s critical that you get confirmed and get started. Again, thank you for joining us and for your willingness to go to work for the people of this country.

MR. GROVES: I can’t wait to be able to work with all of you. Thank you.

SEN. CARPER. With that, this hearing is adjourned. Thank you.

(END)