

# CarnegieMellon

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April 26, 2010

Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney  
2332 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-3214

Congressman Charles W. Dent  
1009 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-3815

Senator Thomas R. Carper  
513 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-0803

Senator Tom Coburn  
172 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-3604

Dear Congresswoman Maloney, Congressman Dent, Senator Carper and Senator Coburn,

We write to share our views on oversight of the Decennial Census and to express our support for H.R. 4945, the *Census Oversight Efficiency and Management Reform Act*. Our support for this bill is based on our many combined years of research on the scientific and procedural complexities of the Decennial Census, from our participation on many advisory commissions and panels convened by the Committee on National Statistics of the National Academy of Sciences, and from our numerous opportunities to review and analyze the various Decennial Census plans put forward by the U.S. Census Bureau. As participants in such studies we have gained important insights regarding both the planning and implementation of each Decennial Census since 1980.

The views expressed here are our own and do not represent the positions of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Research Council, or the Committee on National Statistics.

The Decennial Census operates on a constitutionally mandated ten-year cycle, while presidential administrations operate on a four-year cycle. This structural discrepancy causes major operational problems. Furthermore, it is not that the career professionals at the Census Bureau do not know what they need to do; rather, we believe the problem stems from the structure of the agency's oversight, which does not allow a concerted focus on the mission of the agency to perform the census on time and in the

most accurate way possible. We believe there is a critical need to bring focus, transparency and accountability to the process of planning and implementing the census and to not just continue the pattern of the last three censuses and the one that is currently being conducted.

Currently, the Census Bureau is required to navigate a complex maze of supervision at the Department of Commerce. We believe that your legislation addresses this organizational and structural problem by enabling the Director of the Census Bureau to report directly to the Secretary of Commerce. In addition, the Director, as the leader of a scientific organization with such tremendous constitutional responsibilities, should be allowed to submit recommendations or testimony to Congress that represent his or her own views, which may not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Commerce or the administration currently in power.

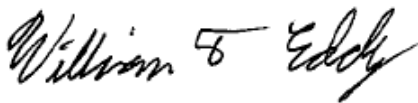
Further, the Director of the Census Bureau should serve a fixed term of office. Currently, the 10-year life cycle of planning and operations for each Decennial Census is disrupted by resignations and appointments virtually every time a new administration takes office. It would make sense to have the Director of the Census Bureau serve a Presidential term appointment of five years. The 10-year decennial cycle should be split into two, five-year phases -- one for planning and one for operations. This would create continuity across administrations.

We feel the provisions for ensuring that there is transparency in the budget process are critical to making sure, especially in the early phases of the census, that there is adequate support early enough to ensure success and to prevent the need for last minute fixes that risk accuracy and drive up costs.

Based on our experience, these changes to the oversight structure and management of the Census Bureau would greatly improve Decennial Census operations and lead to greater transparency within the whole decennial planning and operations process.

If we can be useful in any way to your efforts to enact this legislation, please let us know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William F. Eddy". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

William F. Eddy  
John C. Warner Professor of Statistics, Carnegie Mellon University  
Former Member, Panel to Review the 2000 Census  
Chair, Committee on National Statistics

Judith A. Seltzer  
Professor, Dept. of Sociology, UCLA  
Member, Panel to Review the 2010 Census  
Member, Panel on the Design of the 2010 Census Program of Evaluations and Experiments  
Member, Panel on Residence Rules in the Decennial Census

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Member, Panel on Estimates of Poverty for Small Geographical Areas  
Member, Panel on Research on Future Census Methods  
Member, Panel on Coverage Evaluation and Correlation Bias in the 2010 Census  
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Member, Panel on the Functionality and Usability of Data from American Community Survey

Karen Kafadar

Rudy Professor of Statistics, Indiana University

Member, Committee on National Statistics, 2006-2011

Member, National Institute of Statistical Sciences (NISS), 2010-2012

Publications Chair, International Statistical Institute, 2007-2009

Donald F. Cooke, former Chief Scientist, Tele Atlas

Current member of the NRC Panel to Review the 2010 Census

Founder, Geographic Data Technology, 1980

Ivan Fellegi

Chief Statistician of Canada Emeritus

Head of Statistics Canada for 23 years and employee of the Canadian statistical office for 53 years

Member of three National Academy of Sciences panels on decennial censuses

Past President, International Statistical Institute

Past Chair, OECD Committee on Statistics

Past Chair, United Nations Conference of European Statisticians

Past President, Statistical Society of Canada

Joseph Paul Newhouse

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Past President, International Health Economics Association

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Member, Panel on Census Requirements in the Year 2000 and Beyond

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Former Member, Committee on National Statistics