

STATEMENT OF
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CENSUS 2000, IMPLEMENTATION IN INDIAN COUNTRY
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON INDIANS AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE
MAY 4, 1999

INTRODUCTION

Good morning Chairman Ben Nighthorse Campbell, Vice-Chairman Daniel Inouye, and members of the Committee on Indian Affairs. Thank you for providing this opportunity to testify at this hearing on Census 2000, Implementation in Indian Country. I am Edna Paisano. I am a citizen of the Nez Perce Nation and I also am Laguna Pueblo. I am providing my testimony today as an individual not as a representative of a tribal government, organization, or federal agency. I share the goal of obtaining an accurate census in Census 2000 in Indian Country with everyone here today. In the 1990 census, there was an undercount of 4.5 percent of American Indians in the U.S. and 12.2% undercount of American Indians living on reservations. It is important to achieve an accurate census because the data from the decennial census is the only comprehensive source of demographic, social and economic data available on American Indians and Alaska Natives and their land areas. The Congress, federal agencies, American Indian and Alaska Native governments and organizations, and researchers look to the Census Bureau for this information. Several federal agencies use census data in program allocation formulas for tribal governments.

I have work experience on decennial censuses because I worked at the Bureau of the Census for more than 21 years (from June 1976 to November 1997). I worked as a demographic statistician in Population Division. Over the 21 years I worked at the Census Bureau, the effort to improve the accuracy of data on American Indians and Alaska Natives has slowly improved but more work needs to be done. Since I have been gone from the Census Bureau for a year and a half and things have changed, I reviewed the Census 2000 information available from the Census Bureau's web page in preparing for this testimony. In particular, I reviewed the following documents: Census 2000 Operational Plan, Using Traditional Census-Taking Methods, January 1999; Updated Summary: Census 2000 Operational Plan, February 1999; dress rehearsal evaluation studies on Effectiveness of Paid Advertising, Evaluation of Mail Return Questionnaires, Housing Unit Coverage on Master Address File; and the Office of Management and Budget report, Draft Provisional Guidance on the Implementation of the 1997 Standards for the Collection of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity.

RELATIONSHIPS AND CONSULTATIONS WITH

AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE GOVERNMENTS

To build ongoing and meaningful relationships with tribal governments and involve tribal governments in the census process, the Census Bureau needs to fully implement the April 29, 1994 Presidential Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies; March 1994 American Indian and Alaska Native Policy of the Department of Commerce, and the March 14, 1998 Executive Order, Consultation with Indian Tribal Governments. The essence of these documents is to work with federally recognized tribal governments on a government-to-government basis and to have a process for regular and meaningful consultation and collaborations with tribal governments.

The Census Bureau needs to formally issue its own American Indian and Alaska Native policy to reflect its commitment to working with federally recognized tribes on a government-to-government basis. The census advisory committee also requested a policy be issued. Before I left, I drafted a policy which had gone through several reviews and needed formal presentation to the executive staff for approval. To my knowledge the policy has not been approved and signed. The policy would help build stronger ongoing relationships with tribal governments because it would demonstrate the Census Bureau's commitment to working with them.

Tribal governments and the American Indian and Alaska Native census advisory committees requested several times for the Census Bureau to establish an American Indian and Alaska Native office, reporting directly to the director, to be responsible for implementing the government-to-government relationship with federally recognized tribal governments. The office would have met the need for tribal governments as well as other American Indian and Alaska Native organizations and individuals' 1) to request for meetings, 2) to call for answers or to be correctly referred to the right office for the information, and 3) to review census policies, plans, or programs to ensure they efficiently addressed the needs of tribal governments and the American Indian and Alaska Native populations. Former Director Barbara Bryant agreed to establish such an office but Dr. Bryant's proposal would have also included working with the Black, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Hispanic populations as well. Unfortunately, Dr. Bryant's term ended and the office has been not established.

There is also a need for Census Bureau managers and employees throughout the agency to be trained on tribal sovereignty, the government-to-government relationship, tribal history, and tribal cultural awareness. Without an understanding and knowledge of these it is difficult to build a trusting and respectful working relationship with tribal governments.

The Census Bureau does have a Census Advisory Committee on the American Indian and Alaska Native populations as they did for the 1990 census to provide advice to them. The Committee does not replace the need to work and consult directly with tribal governments because the Committee consists of individuals. The Committee is one of the positive actions of the Census Bureau because for the 1980 census a committee was not established based on advice from a few American Indian organizations and individuals. I served as Committee Liaison for both Committees and found the members to be hard working and conscientious about providing relevant advice and recommendations. They deserve a special thank you because they are

investing their personal time away from their families and jobs to serve on the Committee.

AMERICAN INDIAN EMPLOYEES AT THE CENSUS BUREAU

The Census Bureau needs to hire more permanent full-time American Indian and Alaska Native employees at headquarters and regions. When I was hired in June of 1976, I was the first full-time American Indian employee ever hired. During the 21 years I worked there other American Indians were hired but have since left. There are a variety of reasons for American Indians leaving but a primary reason is there was no opportunity for advancement to higher grade levels of GS/GM 13-15 or above.

American Indian and Alaska Native employees would enhance the Census Bureau's ability to work with tribal governments as well as to better design policies and programs specifically for or included tribal governments and American Indian and Alaska Native populations. It is a challenge to hire American Indians and Alaska Natives at headquarters because of the distance from the reservations and villages to Washington, D.C. There are several long term solutions that the Census Bureau could explore. There are two summer internships that could be utilized to get students familiar with census careers—Washington Internships for Native Students through American University and Memorandum of Understanding that the Department of Commerce has with the American Indian Science and Engineering Society. The Executive Order on Tribal Colleges and Universities provides for partnerships between federal agencies and the tribal colleges and universities which could focus on careers and other subjects. Also, the American Indians and Alaska Natives temporarily hired for Census 2000 at headquarters and the regions provide a pool of employees that can be converted to full-time.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

The Office of Management and Budget report, Draft Provisional Guidance on the Implementation of the 1997 Standards for the Collection of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity, outlined many alternatives based on research and analyses. The research conducted thus far did not include any American Indians and Alaska Natives. The report also says it did not address plans for tabulating plans for American Indian and Alaska Native tribes or detailed groups of Asian or Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander populations—it does not say when or if it will or how tribal governments or the other groups will be consulted.

The reporting more than one race has implications for tabulating tribal data. What is the Census Bureau plans for tabulating and publishing tribe data? In the decennial census the tabulation and data presentation of tribes is extremely important to tribal governments because it is the only source of tribal data other than their own tribal enrollment records. Some federal agencies also use tribe data for program allocations. Most tribal enrollment records do not include social, economic, and housing characteristics. For the 1980 and 1990 censuses the code lists used for coding tribal write-ins on the questionnaire were provided to tribal governments for their review and comment so that tribal write-ins would be correctly coded and data published.

PARTNERSHIPS AND THE TRIBAL LIAISON PROGRAM

Partnerships are one of four strategies for Census 2000. How many partnerships have been formally established to work with tribal governments, urban American Indians, state recognized groups, and national/regional organizations?

The Tribal Liaison Program was one of the most successful programs implemented in the 1990 census. The Tribal Liaison Program was implemented at the Menominee dress rehearsal site and the 1996 Community Census sites of the Pueblo of Acoma and the Fort Hall Reservation and trust lands, however, reports were not available on the Census Bureau web page to review. What is the status of the program? How many tribal governments have appointed tribal liaisons? Have the manuals and training material been finalized for Census 2000? What is the schedule for training?

MASTER ADDRESS FILE

The Master Address File is the key to an accurate Census 2000 and to the American Community Survey. The American Community Survey will eventually replace the long form in the 2010 Census. The Master Address File, once completed, is the file where the samples are drawn for the American Community Survey and future demographic surveys. Tribal government involvement in building the Master Address File is critical. It is stated that tribal governments are involved for feature updates as roads and street names as well as boundary review. What is the status of tribal government involvement? How many tribal governments are actually participating and what alternatives are in place if tribal governments are not participating or not responding in a timely manner. A number of reservations, trust lands, and Alaska Native villages will be list/enumerate areas. Is there a quality control on the listing of addresses for completeness in these areas before adding to the master address file? This type of data collection could lend itself to the undercount of housing units and therefore people.

PAID ADVERTISING

The dress rehearsal evaluation for paid advertising only included Sacramento, California and the South Carolina sites. Young and Rubicam, Inc. is conducting the Census 2000 Advertising Campaign. There is an American Indian subcontractor for the advertising campaign. When will the evaluation of the paid advertising at the Menominee site by Young and Rubicam, Inc. and the American Indian subcontractor be available? In the Sacramento evaluation there is no mention of American Indians. What other evaluations are being done to evaluate paid advertising with the American Indian and Alaska Native population in urban areas and in American Indian and Alaska Native areas?

PERSON COVERAGE IN HOUSING UNITS

This coverage edit in American Indian reservation and trust land areas and Alaska Native villages is extremely important since only six people can be listed on the questionnaire. American Indians and Alaska Natives have larger families, more than one family living in a house, or extended families than most other populations.

AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE TRIBE

In 1990, about 13 percent of persons who identified as American Indian did not write-in a tribe. What is being done to increase the reporting of tribe? What types of awareness is being conducted to educate the American Indian and Alaska Native community to write in tribes? For telephone and personal visit interviews, how are the enumerators being trained and instructed to ask for tribe?

ALASKA NATIVE VILLAGES

Remote Alaska enumeration will include most of the Alaska Natives villages. What is the status of the overall plan for remote Alaska? What operational tests and evaluations have been conducted to improve the data collection procedures for remote Alaska? When will these reports be available? How many partnerships have been established for the more than 200 Alaska Native tribal governments?

POST ENUMERATION SURVEY

The Post Enumeration Survey is used to measure the overall and differential coverage in Census 2000. The 1990 census was the first time the Census Bureau measured the coverage of the American Indian and Alaska Native population in the U.S. and American Indians living on reservations. The strata for this survey needs to include sampling strata for American Indian and Alaska Native areas (reservations, trust lands, tribal jurisdiction statistical areas, Alaska Native village statistical areas, and regional corporations) and urban areas so that coverage estimates can be produced. In 1990 the 12.2 percent undercount only applied to reservations as a whole not to individual reservations. The Census Bureau needs to explore whether coverage measures can be developed to apply to individual reservations. It is especially important if the coverage measures are used to adjust the data for state redistricting and federal programs.

OVERALL RESEARCH

The Census Bureau needs to include American Indian and Alaska Native populations and their lands areas in their research and evaluation plans, and administrative records research, and 2010 census plans.

CLOSING

Thank you again for this opportunity to present my views on Census 2000. These items were those that I thought basic to an accurate count of American Indians and Alaska Natives. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.