

Federal-State Cooperative for Population Estimates

2024 Winter Steering Committee Hybrid Meeting

Director's remarks as prepared for delivery

February 13, 2024

- Hello, everyone, and thank you for inviting me to today's discussion.

TRANSFORMATION AND MODERNIZATION

- I want to begin by talking for a few minutes about modernizing our approach to producing data.
- As a statistical agency, we're also facing new and complex data user needs, data collection challenges, the demand for doing more with less, and the need for improved collaboration with stakeholders and partners.
- To adapt in this changing environment, we understand the need for new innovations and approaches to help us transform and modernize how we do our work.
- We recently launched Transformation and Modernization—a multiyear, enterprisewide effort to evaluate and improve current processes, infrastructures, and mindsets to ensure that we equitably collect, analyze, and disseminate valuable information that reflects the changing nature of our nation's population and economy.
- While this effort doesn't focus on any single initiative or program, it seeks to assess and improve the universe of current and future U.S. Census Bureau activities.

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENTS

- Now, as we go about our work, it's critical that I—and more importantly, we, at the Census Bureau—reach out to our partners, stakeholders, data users, policymakers, and the public. We need to understand their needs, concerns, and more generally, their perspectives on matters related to statistical data products.
- That is why a principal priority of mine as the director of the Census Bureau is to seek out, listen to, and converse with the multitude of diverse voices across our nation. We are actively engaging the public.
- We recognize the value and importance of different perspectives. They help us to be innovative and creative, and ultimately produce accurate, relevant, and useful data on our nation's people, places, and economy.
- Toward that end, I continue to make a concerted effort to engage stakeholders, partners, and local communities across America.
- I have met with hundreds of users of Census Bureau data across America including partners, state, local, and tribal government officials, community groups, and businesses.

RACE/ETHNICITY OUTREACH

- As I'm sure you know, we continue to work closely with the Chief Statistician of the United States and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) as they review Statistical Policy Directive 15, which governs how the federal government collects race and ethnicity data.
- As part of research related to the updating the federal race and ethnicity standards, OMB sought agency participation for testing proposed changes.
- In response, many agencies—including many of you in the room today—offered resources and your surveys as test beds. The willingness of your agencies and supporting Census Bureau staff to implement these tests quickly was a great demonstration of shared mission across our agencies for continuous improvement and being responsive to the times.
- And, we continuously research strategies for improving respondent understanding of questions we ask and the accuracy of the data we produce.

2030 CENSUS ACTIVITIES

- In our journey toward the 2030 Census, we're conducting 55 projects in five different enhancement areas. You can read about all of them in our 2030 Census Research Explorer tool, which is online at census.gov.
- Several projects primarily focus on reaching, motivating, and accurately counting historically undercounted populations. But this research intersects with many more projects, even if the titles of the research do not include the term “historically undercounted population.”
- Our efforts in this arena cover a wide range of topics. Among them:
 - Conducting research to inform our overall 2030 Census communications campaign and developing outreach strategies for historically undercounted populations.
 - Exploring how we can use administrative records and analysis of 2020 Census data to investigate the undercount of young children, one of the most persistently undercounted groups.
 - Examining the use of tailored contact strategies.
 - Developing an internet self-response instrument specifically for certain types of noninstitutional group quarters, such as college student housing or military barracks.
- This year, we also announced the establishment of a new Federal Advisory Committee to focus on the 2030 Census. The 2030 Census Advisory Committee will be distinct from our other committees and will focus exclusively on the operational, technical, and communications aspects of the census.
- About 30 members representing stakeholder organizations, groups, interest, and viewpoints will serve on this committee, and it will have its first meeting in early 2024.

FY 2024 BUDGET

- I want to end with a brief discussion of our budget. The FY 2024 Senate Commerce, Justice, and Science (CJS) Appropriations Act was released July 13. It would provide the Census Bureau with \$1.501 billion, which is \$16 million above the FY 2023 appropriation level.
- The Senate Appropriation Committee funding level would allow the Census Bureau to generally maintain its current operations plus make improvements to population estimates and support Puerto Rico data collection operations.
- On November 2, 2023, the House Appropriation Committee released its version of the FY 2024 CJS Appropriations Act, which would fund the Census Bureau at \$1.354 billion, representing a \$131 million reduction below the FY 2023 appropriation level.
- The FY 2024 level proposed by the House Appropriation Committee is consistent with FY 2022 funding levels and would present multiple operational challenges to the Census Bureau.

- While both the House and Senate versions of the CJS Appropriation Bills have been made public, they still need to be reconciled and, therefore, have a way to go before any of this is final, but it does signal challenges ahead for the Census Bureau.
- Meanwhile, the Census Bureau is operating under the terms of a continuing resolution based on FY 2023 funding levels. The current continuing resolution lasts through March 8.
- Thank you again for having me, and I look forward to today's discussion.