

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
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August 10, 2016

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

The U.S. Census Bureau (Bureau) recently passed the half-way mark in its preparations for the 2020 Decennial Census. As part of its preparations for the 2020 Census, the Bureau is undertaking an ambitious modernization and automation program called Census Enterprise Data Collection and Processing (CEDCaP). The CEDCaP program will replace the Bureau's outdated and inefficient methods of conducting the decennial census and is projected to save taxpayers approximately \$5.2 billion.¹ CEDCaP will significantly change the methods and technology the Bureau uses to count the population by introducing an Internet-response option, using mobile devices for field surveys, and automating the management of field operations, among other things.

On June 9, 2016, the Committee held a hearing on the CEDCaP program and the Bureau's overall preparedness for the 2020 Census.² Witnesses testified about the Government Accountability Office's findings that the Bureau had not yet begun implementation of most of the key systems needed to support the redesign. Witnesses also testified that considerable work remains before the Bureau will have the needed systems in place. Specifically, while the Bureau has conducted multiple site tests, the key systems used to conduct these tests have now been discontinued. The Bureau decided in May to buy commercial off the shelf (COTS) products instead of using the custom-built products it previously tested.³ According to Bureau officials,

¹ *Preparing for the 2020 Census Will the Technology be Ready?: Hearing Before the Subcomm. On Gov't Operations and the Subcomm. On Information Technology of the H. Comm. On Oversight and Gov't Reform*, 114th Cong. (2015) (Testimony of Carol Cha).

² *Census 2020: Examining the Readiness of Key Aspects of the Census Bureau's 2020 Census Preparation: Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Oversight and Gov't Reform*, 114th Cong. (2016) [hereinafter *Hearing on Census 2020 Preparedness*].

³ John H. Thompson, *Preparing for the 2020 Census: Choosing Data Collection and Processing Systems*, DIRECTOR'S BLOG, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU (May 26, 2016), available at

the agency awarded a contract for this COTS product, and they expect to have the product, as well as other necessary systems, in place by November 2016. However, as of the June 9, 2016 hearing, the Census Director testified that the Bureau had only “developed a schedule to develop a schedule.”⁴

The Bureau has one year to prepare for the end-to-end test that begins in August 2017. This end-to-end test will be the final test before the 2020 Census. We are concerned about the Bureau’s ability to reengineer business processes, and configure, integrate, and test production-level systems in time for this critical test, especially in light of the short window that remains before the end-to-end test begins.

To assist the Committee in its continued oversight over the Bureau’s preparedness for the 2020 Census, we request that GAO evaluate the Bureau’s readiness to conduct the 2018 end-to-end test. Specifically, we request that GAO analyze and report on:

1. The status of the Bureau’s implementation of a schedule to procure, test, and implement the COTS products selected in May of 2016 prior to the 2018 end-to-end test;
2. Assess the Bureau’s efforts to design and implement a plan for successfully carrying out the 2020 Census should it fail to test the necessary systems during the 2018 end-to-end test and the ability of the Bureau to identify and address any potential glitches, failures, and problems that are uncovered during the 2018 end-to-end test;
3. Assess which products and systems the Bureau plans to utilize during the 2020 Census that are must-test systems, where failure to test will have significant negative impacts on successfully carrying out the 2020 Census;
4. The Bureau’s planned alternative method to conduct the Census should it be determined that the currently expected method fails testing;
5. The security measures planned and/ or currently in place for the system to be tested as well as the final system; and
6. What steps the Bureau must take, and a timeline in which the Bureau must take those steps, to ensure a successful 2018 end-to-end test and successful implementation of key products for the 2020 Census.

<http://directorsblog.blogs.census.gov/2016/05/26/preparing-for-the-2020-census-choosing-data-collection-and-processing-systems/>.

⁴ *Hearing on Census 2020 Preparedness*, *supra* note 2 (statement of John Thompson).

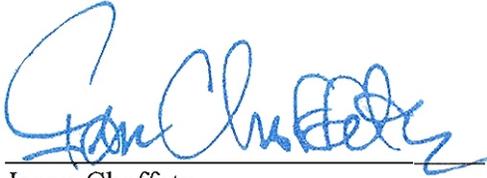
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Please contact Patrick Hartobey with the Majority staff at (202) 225-5074 and Mark Stephenson with the Minority staff at (202)-225-5051 with any questions about this request. Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Jason Chaffetz
Chairman



Elijah E. Cummings
Ranking Member



Mark Meadows
Chairman
Subcommittee on Government Operations



Gerald E. Connolly
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Government Operations