

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 19, 2006

The Honorable David M. Walker
Comptroller General of the United States
Government Accountability Office
441 G. Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear General Walker:

The Census Bureau is gearing up for the 2010 Decennial Census, which is estimated to cost more than \$11 billion and includes about \$3 billion in information technology (IT) investments. For this census, the bureau is reengineering its processes and increasing the use of automation and technology. To do so, it has initiated several major system acquisitions (including the Decennial Response Integration System (DRIS) and the Field Data Collection Automation (FDCA) program), upgraded legacy systems including the MAF/TIGER database and headquarters data processing systems, and it plans to integrate this "system of systems" for a 2008 exercise called the "Dress Rehearsal" and the 2010 Census. The bureau's ability to identify and mitigate risks will be critical to ensuring that individual systems do not experience cost and schedule overruns or performance shortfalls, and that the overall integration of the systems is successful.

The bureau has experienced problems with the development, acquisition, and implementation of systems in preparing for past censuses, including cost increases. Further, GAO recently reported on risk management and other key acquisition management capability areas on the DRIS and FDCA acquisitions, and found that the bureau had not fully implemented a risk management process. Therefore, we would like GAO to:

- (1) Determine current status and plans for key system acquisitions and system development initiatives, including costs and schedule.
- (2) Determine the status and risks of key system acquisitions and system development initiatives (including DRIS, FDCA, and headquarters data processing systems) and evaluate whether the bureau is adequately managing risks on these system initiatives.
- (3) Evaluate whether the bureau is adequately managing risks on its efforts to integrate systems for the 2010 Decennial Census Program.
- (4) Provide the Subcommittee with periodic updates on these oversight activities leading up to the 2010 Census.

In addition to examining the key system acquisitions and system development initiatives, we would like the GAO to determine if the Census Bureau could achieve any cost savings for the 2010 Census by contracting with the private sector for all possible decennial Census activities, such as mailings, phone calls, and data integration.

If you have any questions, please contact Chris Barkley at 202-224-4751 or Meredith Pumphrey at 202-224-6579. Thank you in advance for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Coburn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Tom Coburn
Chairman
Subcommittee on Federal
Financial Management, Government
Information and International Security

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Carper". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Thomas R. Carper
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Federal
Financial Management, Government
Information and International Security