

TESTIMONY OF
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SUBMITTED TO
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Good Morning Chairman Campbell and Vice Chairperson Inouye and members of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee. I am Taylor McKenzie, M.D., Vice-President of the Navajo Nation. Thank you for this opportunity to present the views of the Navajo Nation regarding the upcoming census. Since sampling cannot be used to conduct the census as a result of the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in January 1999, the Navajo Nation believes that there are several issues that the Congress and the Census Bureau must consider in conducting the enumeration within the Navajo Nation.

First, I let me state that the Navajo Nation is actively working with the Census Bureau in coordinated efforts to ensure accurate counting in next year's enumeration. Our proactive approach is described below.

Navajo Nation Census 2000 Complete Count Commission

To illustrate the Navajo Nation's efforts to prepare for the enumeration, the Navajo Nation Council approved the creation of the "Census 2000 Complete Count Commission" during their Spring Session held two weeks ago. The Commission will be the lead agency in conducting a Census 2000 awareness campaign throughout the Navajo Nation by reviewing activities, coordinating work, providing guidance, promoting and supporting efforts of the entities and organizations involved with the Census 2000 Operation.

The ten-member Commission will be comprised of Navajo government and private sector representatives who will serve one year and six months terms. The Commission is empowered to carry out the following:

1. On behalf of the Navajo Nation, the Commission shall provide oversight of the Census 2000 activities and encourage fellow Navajo leaders and residents, especially elected officials, to assume part of the responsibility to educate their respective chapters of the importance and benefits of a complete and accurate census count.
2. The Commission shall provide reports to the Navajo Nation Council on its activities on a quarterly basis.
3. The Commission shall develop and adopt a Navajo Nation Media Plan that will list the sources, types and usage of media available to reach the majority of the Navajo population.
4. The Commission shall promote the Census 2000 through education of the public at meetings and community events regarding the importance and benefits of a complete and accurate Navajo count.
5. The Commission shall ensure that Navajo and federal government agencies coordinate the complete count efforts from the central units to the local levels.
6. The Commission shall work closely with the three branch chiefs of the Navajo Nation government, Navajo Nation Council, Agency Councils, Local Chapters, Local Schools, BIA, IHS, U.S. Census Bureau Offices, Navajo Nation Census Advisory Committee(s) and other committees organized to assist with the promotion and implementation of the year 2000 census count.
7. The Commission shall recommend to; provide instruction to; and/or assign any Navajo

governmental unit in resolving any issue which may serve as an obstacle to the successful implementation of a complete count.

8. The Commission shall prepare a written activity report within thirty (30) workdays of its last scheduled quarterly meeting. Copies of such report shall be made available to the Navajo Nation Council, Office of President & Vice President, all Navajo government branches and divisions, Local Chapters, BIA, IHS, and the U. S. Census Bureau.

By creating the Navajo Nation Census 2000 Commission, we are demonstrating our responsibility to ensure an accurate count during next year's enumeration.

While we are certain the Commission will address all areas needed for accurate counting, we raise the following concerns relating to Mapping; Recruitment of Qualified Personnel (Enumerators) and Publicity.

Mapping

Mapping used by the Census Bureau must be accurate and reflect the political units of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Navajo Nation. As some of you may be aware, the Navajo Nation is divided into several components, known as agencies. Please refer to the attached document for reference. This was the administrative unit used by the BIA in carrying forward its functions. However, in recent years the agency boundaries have become important to the Navajo Nation for its governmental activities, particularly in planning and service delivery. Since accurate population counts impact both planning and service delivery, it would be very helpful if the data generated in the census could be used to determine agency population. However, since those agencies cross county and state lines, the development of areas reflecting the agencies is made somewhat more complex.

At the same time, the Navajo Nation is composed of 110 Chapters, which are our local units of government. Although it would be misleading to consider the chapter as a county, they are more significant than a township or municipality, and are most comparable to counties within a state. While historically the Census Bureau has been willing to consider chapter boundaries in the Navajo Nation when conducting the Census, during the 1990 Census, a now computerized method was adopted which would only consider chapter boundaries if they followed physical features. Yet the Census Bureau had no difficulties in creating census aggregation lines along county and municipal boundaries which do not follow physical features.

The Navajo Nation understands that there are conventions, like state and county boundaries which must be considered in conducting the census. Consequently, we propose that the Navajo Nation be mapped as a whole, then lines be added to reflect state and county areas. On top of this should be added the agency boundaries. The areas which are created by the boundaries of each agency within a county, should be designated "County Census Divisions" or CCD's. These CCD's which make up each agency can then be totaled later for planning purposes for both the BIA and the Navajo Nation. Finally, with respect to the chapters of the Navajo Nation, the Census Bureau should designate these as "Minor Civil Divisions" or MCD's. This approach would recognize and respect the Navajo Nation's political subdivisions, just as the subdivisions of state and county government are currently reflected in the census.

The need for accurate mapping is also required by the nature of the land status within the Navajo Nation. Although most of the Navajo Nation is composed of trust land, there are portions of the Navajo Nation, particularly in New Mexico, where land has passed into private ownership. This area, known as the checkerboard, must be reflected in the census mapping if the census for the Navajo Nation is to be accurate.

Since the Navajo Nation presentation of testimony on Census 2000 on January 29, 1999 at the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform Field Hearing on the Decennial Census, it has come to the attention of the Navajo Nation that some questions may exist regarding the geopolitical divisions within the Navajo Nation, particularly the chapter and

the agency. I want to take this opportunity to supplement the earlier statements of the Navajo Nation regarding these governmental units within the Navajo Nation.

The Navajo Nation is divided up into 110 chapters. The chapter is the fundamental local governmental unit within the Navajo Nation. Each chapter has popularly elected officers, president, vice-president, and secretary. These elected leaders guide the chapter administrations in providing for the local needs of the chapter's population. In many ways the chapters are similar to counties within a state. Especially with recent changes in Navajo Nation laws, the chapters are taking on more responsibilities. It is important to the Navajo Nation to have the chapters reflected in the mapping for the upcoming Census, because the chapters reflect the basic governmental voting block in the Navajo Nation. The population statistics for chapters are also helpful to determine allocation of resources to the different chapters.

At the same time, the Navajo Nation is divided into agencies. These were originally, and remain, administrative designations created by the BIA primarily for management of reservation land bases. The administrative hierarchy within the BIA divides up the United States into different "Area Offices," which are in turn divided up into agencies. Within the Navajo Nation there are 5 agencies.

While, at first, it may seem unnecessary to consider the agency boundaries in looking at the Census, it is worthwhile noting that the agency has become incorporated into the Navajo Nation political system. For example, each of the agencies have a council which considers issues common to the chapters within that agency. Further, the agency geographical subdivision is used in making reports to the Department of the Interior and the Congress. Frequently this information goes to justify resources and budgeting for the services provided within the particular agency.

Recruitment of Qualified Personnel (Enumerators)

One of the most difficult challenges faced by the Census Bureau is hiring sufficient personnel who are in a position to conduct the census. In the Navajo Nation, these individuals must speak both English and Navajo. When recruiting, both the Census Bureau and the prospective census takers must understand that during the two months when the census is conducted, this becomes a full time occupation. Historically, the Navajo Nation has had chapter employees assist in conducting the census. However there is a misunderstanding about how much work goes into census taking; anyone conducting census activities in the Navajo Nation must understand that this is a full-time occupation for that time. If a chapter employee works on a census, he or she must take a leave of absence and be a full-time Census Bureau employee during the census taking.

Indeed, census taking is a difficult task. Usual methods, such as mail surveys will not work. It must be understood that not everyone in the Navajo Nation has a mailing address. Frequently, several family units, which are counted separately for census purpose, share the same post office box. Moreover, many persons and families receive their mail "general delivery" addresses through local trading posts. Whoever conducts the census count must understand this, and actually do the field work necessary to visit the hogans, mobile homes and other housing in the chapters. Without this understanding, the census will result in a guaranteed undercount of the Navajo Nation.

Publicity

If a census is to result in an accurate counting of our Navajo people, there must be extensive written and oral publicity surrounding the census, both in English and Navajo. Not only should this publicity explain the importance generally of the census, but it must also clarify some potential misconceptions. For example, when an individual becomes an enrolled member of Navajo Nation, he or she is given a "census number", which is used only for enrollment and membership purposes. This number has nothing to do with the 10-year census. However, some confusion may result from the use of this term; many individual Navajos who are enrolled and

consequently have a census number, may believe that they have already been counted in the census conducted by the Census Bureau.

To avoid misunderstanding and undercounting in the upcoming census, adequate and extensive publicity is essential. This will also help in recruiting individuals who can work on the census and ultimately make their job easier in going into the field and actually conducting the counts.

Conducting the census is never an easy task. Although such methods as statistical sampling would be helpful, under current federal law, only an actual count may be made. If the 2000 Census is to be accurate, the key issues of accurate mapping which reflect more than just state and county boundaries, recruitment of an adequate workforce, and early and extensive publicity must be addressed. While the Navajo Nation government will assist the Census Bureau, more will be required. There must be an understanding of the unique situation and needs of the Navajo Nation. The land base of the Navajo Nation must be understood and the living conditions must be recognized. Without this understanding and appropriate actions to address these issues, an undercount of the Navajo people is likely.

The Navajo Nation appreciates this opportunity to present its views on this important topic. If there are questions or more information that the Committee needs, we will be happy to assist you. Thank you.