



AMERICAN STATISTICAL ASSOCIATION

Promoting the Practice and Profession of Statistics®

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November 21, 2017

The Honorable Wilbur Ross  
Secretary, United States Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Mr. Secretary,

I write to express concern about the qualifications of an individual the Administration reportedly is considering to serve as deputy director of the United States Census Bureau. According to these news reports, this individual appears to lack the necessary management and statistical agency experience, and may be viewed by many to have a very political perspective. Moreover, the appointment appears to be scheduled to precede Senate confirmation of the next Census Bureau Director, thereby circumventing the Senate's opportunity to act in time for major decisions about the 2020 census.

The deputy director of the Census Bureau should be extensively credentialed; the individual appointed should possess strong management experience, economic and statistical skills, an understanding of the Bureau's products and broader relevance, visibility in the statistical community, an ability to interact effectively with both Congress and senior Department of Commerce staff. It is imperative that the deputy director have professional qualifications to maintain the Bureau's objectivity and, just as importantly, the perception of its objectivity. Indeed, the deputy director has traditionally been a civil servant with the credentials we call for.

Throughout its 178 year history, the American Statistical Association has worked with the Census Bureau to help ensure an accurate and cost-effective decennial census. With this experience, we know it is essential the decennial census be regarded as a non-political activity. Any perception of a political motive will only undermine this most important activity enshrined in the United States Constitution. For this reason, Congress requires Senate confirmation of the director. We urge the deputy director be of stature and experience that will maintain integrity and objectivity of the Census Bureau and the decennial census.

The qualifications we urge are clearly articulated in the National Academies' Principles and Practices for a Federal Statistical Agency. We also respectfully urge the prompt appointment of a

director with the aforementioned qualifications. A Senate-confirmed leader is essential in the final few years leading up to the 2020 decennial census.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barry D. Nussbaum". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "B".

Barry D. Nussbaum

President, American Statistical Association