



AMERICAN STATISTICAL ASSOCIATION
Promoting the Practice and Profession of Statistics®

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ASA Statement on the Retirement of U.S. Census Director John Thompson and the Nomination of His Successor

(May 12, 2017)

The ASA leadership expresses its sincere gratitude to U.S. Census Bureau Director John Thompson for his three decades of federal service and is disappointed to hear of his early departure. Thompson is a dedicated public servant and a staunch defender of the need for unbiased data. He is also an expert in cutting-edge statistical and survey methods, which he applied with his strong census team to re-engineer both the bureau and the decennial census. Thanks to his leadership, the redesigned decennial census is estimated to save American taxpayers \$5 billion, if the testing and development is adequately funded through the remainder of the multi-year ramp up. Thompson's leadership also extended to the broader federal statistical system, where he worked effectively with other statistical agencies to improve efficiency. We wish director Thompson well in his future endeavors.

The ASA leadership urges the Trump Administration to quickly identify a strong successor to director Thompson to ensure an effective continuation of decennial census preparations. We think the next director's credentials should include strong management experience, economic and statistical skills, extensive engagement with the federal statistical agencies, familiarity with the bureau and its operations, and an understanding of its products. The next director should be someone with visibility and stature in the statistical community, with an ability to interact effectively with both Congress and Department of Commerce senior staff, and a thorough understanding of the National Academies' *Principles and Practices for a Federal Statistical Agency*. We also emphasize it is critically important to any administration to have, as the head of a statistical agency, a person who is viewed as independent so the agency's data are viewed as objective and credible by all sides of any discussion. An agency whose leader is not perceived as independent may have its data undermined by accusations of improper outside influence.

Finally, we urge adequate funding for the U.S. Census Bureau to ensure the cost savings of the redesigned decennial census and maintenance of the bureau's other programs vital to smart and efficient government, economic development, and myriad private sector uses. The FY17

appropriation finalized at mid-year with only one-third of the requested increase for the decennial census raises grave concerns.

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