

ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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February 14, 2008

The Honorable Henry A. Waxman
Chairman
Oversight and Government Reform Committee
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Waxman:

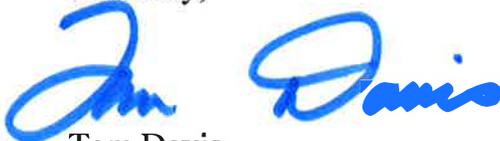
I understand you will be meeting with Secretary Gutierrez in the near future, as will I. It appears he will be informing us of far greater schedule and management problems with the Census Bureau's Field Data Collection Automation (FDCA) contract than the Department acknowledged in testimony before the Subcommittee on Information Policy, the Census and National Archives last December.

As you know, Rep. Turner and I asked last month that you hold oversight hearings on this project after *Government Executive Magazine* reported on the results of a MITRE study expressing deep concerns over schedule delays and "requirements drift" plaguing development of handheld computers and accompanying systems needed to operate a paperless census. Rather than scheduling the requested testimony to fully air these issues, your staff scheduled a bicameral, bipartisan briefing during which Census Bureau representative were evasive and uninformative. Unfortunately, the format of the meeting did not allow for probative questions, or answers, on some of the very matters now threatening the timely completion of activities central to a successful 2010 census.

The integrity of the 2010 Census is obviously critical to every Member of Congress, and as we know from hard-earned experience, lingering troubles in information technology projects cannot be wished or ignored away. The apparent scope of the challenges facing the Census Bureau merit increased oversight by a panel of outside technical experts and by the Oversight Committee.

Assuming you share my concerns about these critical elements of the census program, I hope we can quickly move forward with hearings on how we got to this place and what should be done to mitigate the damage from this point forward. The Committee has always been a constructive force in the complex business of the census, and we can maintain and build on that legacy with timely action now. Given the sensitivity of these issues, we have no plans to release this letter or otherwise discuss these matters publicly at this time. We look forward to continuing discussions with you and your staff on these emerging oversight issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Davis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tom Davis
Ranking Member