

National Association of Regional Councils

Director's remarks as prepared for delivery

January 24, 2023

Introduction

- Good morning, everyone. It's an honor to be here as director of the U.S. Census Bureau. Let me first express my sincere thanks to the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) for the opportunity to address you today.
- NARC and its members have been a valuable, long-time partner to the Census Bureau. In the lead-up to 2020, many regional councils were very active in helping us to spread the word about the 2020 Census and encourage communication, and for that, we're very grateful.
- In fact, without your support and the support from all our partners and stakeholders, we couldn't have achieved the measure of success we attained. We recognize and deeply appreciate that.
- That's part of the reason I wanted to speak with you this morning—not only to thank you for helping during an enormously challenging period, but to continue and indeed strengthen a sustaining, continuous partnership of mutual benefit.
- We recognize that your association and your members rely heavily on the statistical data we produce for planning and governance activities.
- It's very important to us that your members get the data they need, in a form that's easily understandable and usable.
- So, we want to use the time between decades to listen, to understand your data needs, and to develop tools and release statistical data that are most helpful to you.
- Doing this establishes a true, two-way, mutually beneficial partnership.
- By the way, I very much like the association's mission to leverage regional cooperation in addressing community planning and development.
- The association helps councils of governments, regional planning and development agencies, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), and other regional organizations.
- And for these collaborative governmental entities to be effective, they need to work together, to plan together, to do things together.
- All that very much resonates with me. Why?
- Because it acknowledges that the best solutions to societal challenges in things like housing, transportation, public health, economic development and so forth, require coordination, consultation, group planning, and group implementation.
- Regional councils need a community-of-the-whole approach to meet the needs of the broader regional community.
- And in a similar sense, that's where we are at in the Census Bureau.
- We realize that we need a community-of-the-whole approach to collect the data that best serves the American public as well as our economy.
- I'll tell you that in my role as director of the Census Bureau, I have prioritized deeper connections with Census Bureau partners, stakeholders, and the public more generally.

- We need to understand the diverse needs of communities—from urban and suburban neighborhoods as well as from rural counties, farms, ranches, and tribal lands.
- Hey, we serve the public, and that means everyone... including you. And understanding the needs of our diverse communities is really important to us.
- That's why we're committing to strong, continuous relationships with partners, stakeholders, with state and local governments, and with communities.
- You know, last year I spent a lot of time traveling around the country, in full-on community engagement mode.
- I met with Alaska Native tribes, community foundations in California and Alabama, pastors and community leaders in Detroit and Dearborn, and spoke at conferences sponsored by the Conference of Mayors, the National Coalition of State Governments, and others.
- I held formal nation-to-nation tribal consultations, and I met with numerous stakeholders and partners as well as the media.
- And what I came away with was clear: We need a community-of-the whole approach to achieve the Census Bureau mission of providing quality data on our nation's people and economy.
- The Census Bureau cannot do its work alone. We need everyone's help, cooperation, and partnership.
- So, in the spirit of strengthening our partnership, I'd like to start my remarks by sharing some on the value of our data tools.

Data Tools

- Now, I know that NARC's interests includes regional economic development and opportunity zones.
- We have so much data that can be useful to you on topics like these! We provide a treasure trove of economic data on businesses, capturing production, sales and services, industry, number of employees, etc.
- Much of these data are provided by geography, which makes it especially useful for economic development.
- On top of our standard reports, we've combined our population and economic data to develop special tools to help with economic development. Here are a few examples:
 - First, there's the Census Business Builder.
 - It's a suite of services that combine demographic and economic data that helps give you information to develop a business plan to create a business or expand an existing establishment.
 - Another tool is our Business Dynamics Statistics Explorer.
 - It features an intuitive dashboard to construct tables or charts for comparing and ranking businesses by attributes like industry, age of firm, job creation and destruction, and firm births and deaths.
 - So, you could look at job creation by establishment age across counties, or rank establishment entry rates across NAICS industry groups.
 - And then there's the My Community Explorer dashboard.
 - It provides demographic, business, and resilience information for states, counties, and communities.
 - The visualization offers one-stop shopping in a cool interactive tool combining data from the American Community Survey, the Community Resilience Estimates, the County Business Patterns, and the Nonemployer Statistics.

- The data are presented in maps, interactive dashboards, and tables.

2022 Economic Census

- Now, I'm here today to continue and strengthen a continuous partnership NARC and other organizations like it... one that features true mutual benefit.
- I've talked about the data and tools that can help you succeed in your work. After all, relevant data is a key component of data quality.
- But data quality is also directly related to participation in our censuses and surveys. So we are hoping that you can encourage response to our censuses and surveys in the business community.
- Specifically, please help us promote responding to the 2022 Economic Census among your members and partners.
- The 2022 Economic Census is the most comprehensive measure of the U.S. economy. It provides information to businesses, trade associations, economic development organizations, and state, local, and tribal governments.
- They need this information to make informed decisions that affect the health of America's economy.
- As trusted voices in your communities, one of the best things you can do is to spread the word to your members and associated businesses that the economic census is here.
- Please let them know that their response is important to understanding our nation's economy as well as their local community, and their business and industry.
- Participation ensures that associations like yours have quality, timely data about the industries that affect your members.
- The main mailing for the economic census began January 31, 2023, and responses are due on March 15.
- This census is conducted online, and all responses are kept confidential.
- I invite you to visit census.gov/econ to learn more.

Census of Governments

- Finally, I want to mention one last data gathering opportunity that's happening now—the 2022 Census of Governments.
- Right now, we are collecting data for the finance portion of this census, which will continue into the first half of 2023.
- The Census of Governments is the only comprehensive and consistent national dataset detailing the employment of finances of state and local governments.
- As we move through the finance portion of data collection, the participation of government entities is vital to ensuring high-level data quality.
- I encourage you to reach out to your member counties and municipalities and encourage them to participate.

Conclusion

- Well, that is what I wanted to talk to you about today. Thank you again for listening.
- We value our partnership with NARC and look forward to continued engagement. It was an honor to address you.