

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
JOINT MEETING
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TRIBAL AFFAIRS
HOUSE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE
April 23, 2019
8:03 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Representative Tiffany Zulkosky, Chair
Representative Bryce Edgmon, Vice Chair
Representative John Lincoln
Representative Dan Ortiz
Representative Chuck Kopp
Representative Sarah Vance

HOUSE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Harriet Drummond, Co-Chair
Representative Sara Hannan, Co-Chair
Representative Matt Claman
Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins
Representative Steve Thompson
Representative Sharon Jackson

MEMBERS ABSENT

HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Representative Dave Talerico

HOUSE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Josh Revak

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Representative Zack Fields

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION(S): 2020 CENSUS BY THE FORAKER GROUP, COOK INLET HOUSING AUTHORITY, AND DEPARTMENT OF LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

LAURIE WOLF, President/CEO
The Foraker Group
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a presentation on the 2020 United States Census.

EDDIE HUNSINGER, State Demographer
Research and Analysis Section
Department of Labor and Workforce Development
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the presentation on the 2020 United States Census.

KATIE SCOVIC, Senior Policy Analyst
Cook Inlet Housing Authority
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented on the importance of the 2020 United States Census and efforts taken by the Alaska Census Working Group to address census-related challenges in Alaska.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:03:16 AM](#)

CHAIR TIFFANY ZULKOSKY called the joint meeting of the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs and the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee to order at 8:03 a.m. Present at the call to order from the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs were Representatives Vance, Kopp, Ortiz, Lincoln, and Zulkosky. Representative Edgmon arrived as the meeting was in progress. Present at the call to order from the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee were Representatives Jackson, Thompson, Hannan, and Drummond. Representatives Claman and Kreiss-Tomkins arrived as the meeting was in progress. Representative Fields was present in the audience.

**PRESENTATION(S): 2020 Census by The Foraker Group, Cook Inlet
Housing Authority, and Department of Labor & Workforce
Development**

[8:04:02 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY announced that the only order of business would be a presentation on the 2020 Census from the Alaska Census Working Group.

[8:04:41 AM](#)

LAURIE WOLF, President/CEO, The Foraker Group, relayed that The Foraker Group serves as "the state nonprofit association for Alaska and the nonprofit capacity-building organization for nonprofits and tribes across Alaska." She said The Foraker Group gives voice to nonpartisan public policy issues that affect Alaska's nonprofit sector. She noted that over 44,000 Alaskans are employed in the nonprofit sector. She said nonprofits rely on census data to do their work. She remarked, "We get one chance every 10 years to get [the 2020 United States Census] right." She introduced and recognized several people involved with the Alaska Census Working Group.

[8:06:35 AM](#)

MS. WOLF began a PowerPoint presentation, entitled "Making Alaska Count in the 2020 Census" [hard copy included in committee packet]. She said the Foraker Group convened the Alaska Census Working Group in 2017 with the intention of advocating for a fair and accurate count of Alaskans in the 2020 United States Census. She described the working group as a "nonpartisan, multi-sector collaboration" with representation from business, nonprofits, Alaska Native organizations, the University of Alaska, and local, state, and federal government, among others. She said the working group has been influential in building awareness among policymakers about the importance of the 2020 United States Census. She added that the group has begun an "active outreach" to ensure a fair and accurate count in Alaska. She clarified that the fairness and accuracy of the count is the primary motivation of the Alaska Census Working Group. She said the working group is "not focused" on how census data is used after the count, except insofar as the data is used to ensure correct allocation of "federal dollars and decisions."

MS. WOLF explained that the State of Alaska currently receives \$3.2 billion in federal funding. She said that allocation is determined by the United States Census. She said the Alaska Census Working Group wants to see Alaskans receive "their fair share." She stated that a healthy economy relies on accurate data. She stated, "We get one chance every ten years to get this data right." She summarized that good data and federal funds are important to Alaska and serve as a strong incentive to "get the count right."

[8:08:42 AM](#)

MS. WOLF opined that the federal government has fewer resources than are needed for an accurate count in a place like Alaska. She said there will be fewer staff on the ground to conduct the count. She opined that the United States Census Bureau's (USCB's) outreach efforts are "lagging far behind" the timeline necessary to build awareness of the United States Census and to encourage Alaskans to participate. She mused on the amount of advance communication necessary to build trust. She said there will be no outreach to Alaskans whose only address is a post office (P.O.) box to alert them that the United States Census is approaching and to encourage their participation. She noted that this was something identified as missing from the 2010 United States Census and will be missing again during the 2020 United States Census. She said there are no federal dollars set aside to translate United States Census materials into Alaska Native languages. She stated that there is a much greater expectation that Alaskans will respond to the United States Census online but noted that many Alaskans do not have connectivity or access to the Internet. She said she appreciates that a census worker will be placed in each village to conduct "a paper count." She noted that this leaves Alaska's urban areas with a wholly Internet-based process. She said Alaskans must act.

[8:10:11 AM](#)

MS. WOLF explained that private sector businesses, tribes, and local governments also rely on United States Census data. She called the United States Census "the most important piece of data we have to make strategic decisions." She said the Alaska Census Working Group is willing to work to build awareness among policymakers and in Alaska's communities of the importance of a fair and accurate count. She shared the working group's goals: to create a web-based hub for communication for local complete count committees, to translate materials into Alaska Native

languages, to provide a mini grant program to incentivize local action, and to build trust with PO box users. She said a conservative estimate of the cost of these tasks is approximately \$800,000. She added, "In other states, this effort is celebrated and led by the state, but that is not our situation." She noted that neither The Foraker Group nor the Alaska Census Working Group has anything to gain from this effort, "except an understanding that Alaska works best when government at all levels works together with nonprofit organizations and private industry to help Alaskans."

[8:11:37 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked for clarification that the differences between the 2020 census and the 2010 census are that there will be no "heads up" mailing sent to P.O. boxes ahead of the count, that materials will not be translated into Alaska Native languages, and that it will be an online-only response for enumeration.

MS. WOLF clarified that enumeration would not be online-only and that there would be a paper option. She said this would be explained further later in the presentation.

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked for confirmation that regional Complete Count Committees (CCCs) would be established in Alaska communities at an estimated cost of \$800,000.

MS. WOLF clarified that the \$800,000 cost is for the tasks the Alaska Census Working Group has proposed to do; the CCCs are self-funded at the local level. She noted that she does not have a cost estimate for that.

[8:13:00 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ noted that Ms. Wolf has frequently invoked the words "fair" and "accurate." He asked if she could provide additional examples of risks that could result in an unfair or inaccurate count.

MS. WOLF replied that there are multiple ways in which the upcoming census could be "not fair." She explained that even if census efforts were well-funded, Alaska would still be a difficult state in which to conduct a count. She said that the fewer resources committed to the effort by the USCB, the less likely that every Alaskan will be counted.

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ mused that accuracy appears to be the major concern.

MS. WOLF concurred.

[8:14:37 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN asked for elaboration on the \$800,000 figure.

MS. WOLF answered that the \$800,000 figure is the budget compiled by the Alaska Census Working Group based on cost estimates for the proposed tasks. She said there is currently no public source for that funding, so the group has attempted to raise the funds from private sources. She mentioned previous attempts to advocate for state funding for census efforts. She said that to her knowledge, such funding from the State of Alaska has not materialized. She stated that the Alaska Census Working Group has not yet raised the \$800,000. She said the Foraker Group and the Cook Inlet Housing Authority (CIHA) have both contributed in-kind time toward the fundraising effort. She remarked that \$175,000 has been raised from out-of-state sources that have recognized the difficulty of conducting a census in Alaska. She shared that if the State of Alaska were to mirror the census funding formulas of other states, then it could allocate \$1.5 million to the census effort.

CO-CHAIR HANNAN asked whether the State of Alaska has ever allocated funds to support previous census efforts.

[8:16:55 AM](#)

EDDIE HUNSINGER, State Demographer, Research and Analysis Section, Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DLWD), responded that State of Alaska funds were set aside to support CCCs in the 2010 United States Census. He said he would have to research the exact numbers and offered to follow up with the committee.

MS. WOLF answered that the Alaska Census Working Group's goals are to build a website-based communication hub for Alaska's CCCs, translate census materials into Alaska Native languages, create a mini grant program, and send informational mailers to P.O. box users. She said these efforts will be accomplished through "as many partnerships as we can muster."

[8:17:57 AM](#)

KATIE SCOVIC, Senior Policy Analyst, Cook Inlet Housing Authority, identified herself as a member of the Alaska Census Working Group. She continued the PowerPoint presentation begun by Ms. Wolf. Ms. Scovic stated that the largest potential consequence of an inaccurate census count would be a reduction in federal funding, especially considering constrained SOA and local government budgets. She added that an inaccurate count would result in a lack of accurate data for governments, nonprofit organizations, tribal entities, and private businesses to plan for the future. She explained that accurate census data helps influence decisions such as whether to build a new grocery store in a village or whether to add new flight routes. She said census data also influences the enforcement of voting and civil rights laws. She reiterated that every person who goes uncounted in Alaska will cause a reduction in services funded through federal dollars, such as road repairs, education, housing, and food assistance.

MS. SCOVIC detailed several census-related challenges and threats to an accurate count. These include geographic barriers, language barriers, barriers to connectivity, and populations that are especially difficult to count. She noted that due to Alaska's unique geography, special counting methods are used in Alaska that are not used in any other state. Regarding language barriers, she noted that USCB will provide versions of census materials in 14 languages, including English, but none of those languages are Alaska Native languages. She commented on challenges related to Internet connectivity, noting that not all Alaskans will be asked to fill out their census forms online, but the United States Census is trending in that direction.

[8:20:25 AM](#)

MS. SCOVIC addressed a map on slide 8 which displayed the census tracts across the Lower 48 states that are classified as "hard-to-count." She explained that most areas of the Lower 48 are relatively simple to count, with high rates of resident participation. She then addressed a map on slide 9 which displayed the concentration of "hard-to-count" tracts across Alaska. She explained that much of Western Alaska and Northern Alaska are classified as "special enumeration tracts" and require special counting methods. She mused that Alaska is like an inversion of the Lower 48 with most of its geographic space classified as hard to count.

MS. SCOVIC noted that certain populations and areas of Alaska are at risk of being undercounted. She explained that the tracts classified as special enumeration tracts were undercounted in the 2010 United States Census by 8 percent, a figure she called "staggering" considering the federal resources tied to each uncounted person in those areas and the need for federal resources in those areas. She stated that the 2010 United States Census also featured a nearly 5 percent undercount of American Indians and Alaska Natives living on reservations or tribal lands. She said the combination of those two figures indicates that the populations living on tribal lands in the special enumeration tracts are especially at risk of being undercounted and therefore are at risk of missing out on important federal resources. She listed additional groups at risk of undercount: renters, children under the age of five, Alaskans experiencing homelessness, and people living in overcrowded housing situations. She said the Alaska Census Working Group must educate people and conduct outreach in those communities, especially to let people know it is safe to participate in the census and that their data is kept confidential. She said that it is important for someone who may be living in an extremely overcrowded housing situation to feel safe disclosing that information to the United States Census. She spoke of the potential benefits and resources to the community should those people disclose their information. She explained that awareness of the benefits and potential will be a major piece of the strategy to overcome distrust and fear of retribution tied to information provided to the census.

[8:23:48 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON mused on the potential for overcounting in places like Prudhoe Bay and at seafood processing plants in House District 37.

MS. SCOVIC concurred. She said the presence of seasonal workers is another factor that makes it difficult to conduct a census in Alaska. She noted that this is part of why the count begins earlier in Alaska than in other states. She spoke about the challenges in crossing difficult terrain to reach people in their residences as well as in figuring out when during the year certain residents are at home in their permanent residences.

[8:24:48 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked for an explanation of the "special counting methods" used in certain parts of Alaska.

MS. SCOVIC replied that the special enumeration tracts will be counted using in-person counting methods. She described the method known as "remote Alaska," which entails hired census enumerators placed in each village working in hand with community members to verify the count. She said the remote Alaska method is a very time- and resource-intensive process, but the goal of USCB is to count everyone no matter where they live or how difficult they are to count.

8:26:06 AM

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN expressed frustration that USCB will not be translating materials into Alaska Native languages. She asked for elaboration on the role played by the Remote Alaska enumerators in translating the materials and/or communicating in the Alaska Native language of the village to which they are assigned. She mused that the best-case scenario would be for the materials to be translated and for the enumerators to be fluent speakers of the local indigenous language but conceded that such a scenario is not possible for all communities.

MS. SCOVIC imparted the importance of translating the outreach materials that will be mailed to explain the census and guarantee the safety of those who participate. She said there are not enough "boots on the ground" to hand-deliver those materials and to convey that advance information. She said that USCB staff would likely be better positioned to directly address Representative Hannan's question but shared her understanding that the ideal scenario of translated materials and fluent workers is not likely. She noted that it is her sense that translated materials will not be available, so it will be critical to find enumerators who possess the language skills to both work with the USCB staff and serve the needs of the village. She described the hiring process and efforts to find people who meet those qualifications as "intensive." She stated that one of the Alaska Census Working Group's biggest priorities is translation of materials.

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN asked whether materials translated into indigenous languages were made available during previous censuses and, if so, whether the shift away from that occurred at the federal or state level.

MR. HUNSINGER responded that he does not believe USCB has made outreach materials translated into Alaska Native languages available for previous censuses. He opined that this should be

a priority for Alaska as it would help ensure a complete count. Regarding P.O. box outreach, he noted that there was a plan to conduct it for the 2010 United States Census, but those plans did not come to fruition. He added that P.O. box outreach would also help toward the goal of a complete count in 2020. He said the 2020 count would affect Alaska for the following decade.

MS. WOLF answered that the Alaska Census Working Group recently became aware that the total number of languages into which outreach materials would be translated has decreased. She said that is a federal decision rather than a local or statewide one. She offered to pass along information comparing translations for the 2010 and 2020 censuses. She shared that the group was also told that USCB workers will not be able to instruct people how to fill out a census form; therefore, the group is placing a focus on the outreach materials to go out before the census happens, as opposed to the actual census form.

[8:29:42 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked for clarification on how the local enumerator positions are funded.

MS. SCOVIC replied that those enumerators are USCB staff who will "go through the regular federal employment process." She briefly explained the structure through which the federal government has established statewide and local presences via various offices.

[8:30:16 AM](#)

MS. SCOVIC, returning to the topic of undercounting, noted that there is risk in both urban and rural areas of the state. She noted that racial and ethnic minorities are overrepresented in hard-to-count populations, such as the population of people experiencing homelessness and the population of people living in overcrowded housing situations. She said she wanted to clarify that there are hard-to-count tracts in places such as Anchorage, Juneau, and Fairbanks.

MS. SCOVIC explained that the typical counting method is "self-response," meaning people respond via mail, telephone, or through an online form. She noted that self-response is the most common method for households in places like Anchorage, Juneau, and Fairbanks. She said this method involves zero contact with a USCB employee. She described another counting method, the "update leave" method, which she said entails USCB

enumerators "on the ground" delivering census materials at people's doorsteps. She added that the enumerators also verify and correct their address lists throughout this process. She said the update leave method is used for approximately 60,000 households in Alaska in places such as Valdez, Bethel, and Nome.

MS. SCOVIC detailed yet another method, called "update enumerate," which involves USCB enumerators going door to door and counting people at their places of residence. She said this process involves face-to-face interaction during which people are interviewed. She said this method is used for approximately 4,000 households in Southeast Alaska. Ms. Scovic returned to the topic of the remote Alaska counting method, which she said highlights Alaska's uniqueness. She noted that USCB utilizes seven different counting methods and one, remote Alaska, is used solely in Alaska. She said that similar to update enumerate, remote Alaska entails enumerators traveling door-to-door and counting people at their places of residence. She said the collected information is then verified by someone in the village. She described the process as "more collaborative, in-person, [and] time-intensive on the local level." She said the remote Alaska method is used for approximately 30,000 households in Northern Alaska, Western Alaska, and the Aleutian Islands.

[8:33:42 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ asked whether the enumerators who go door to door are required to achieve face-to-face contact with the people they count, or if they are allowed to trust local knowledge about where people live.

MS. SCOVIC responded that an in-person attempt is preferable, and several attempts are to be made to meet difficult-to-reach people in person. She noted that after a certain point, if the person is not able to be reached, then the enumerator is allowed to use neighbors and community members to help locate the person or fill out the form through a collaborate effort.

MS. SCOVIC returned to her presentation and noted that legislators can learn how their district will be counted by visiting www.censushardtocountmaps2020.us. She said the website also contains information about how certain districts were undercounted in 2010. She noted that the Alaska Census Working Group believes one of the largest components of the outreach effort needs to be simply letting people know what the 2020 United States Census entails. As an example, she said residents of Alaska House District 38 should be informed that they will be

counted via in-person methods, that it is safe to participate, and that they should expect to see a community member working with USCB staff to conduct the count.

MS. SCOVIC said the remote Alaska operation will begin January 21, 2020, in Toksook Bay. She stated that the operation will consist of three waves with completion near the end of April 2020. She said the first wave of remote Alaska will cover Western Alaska, the second will cover Northern Alaska, and the third will cover the Aleutian Islands plus Glennallen and the surrounding areas. She noted that the remote Alaska operation will take place earlier than much of the count across much of the rest of the nation.

[8:36:42 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY invited her colleagues to Alaska House District 3 for the start of the 2020 United States Census.

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON quipped that it could be the location of a special legislative session.

MS. SCOVIC restated that to facilitate Remote Alaska, USCB will hire and train an enumerator in each village to help conduct the door-to-door count. She recognized efforts by USCB to mobilize in remote locations to ensure an accurate count in Alaska.

[8:37:41 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON noted that the pay for locally hired USCB enumerators is "pretty good." She recognized that the three-phase approach to enumerating hard-to-count areas makes sense. She asked whether there is concern that the federal government "won't do their job properly," thus reinforcing the need to spend \$800,000.

MS. SCOVIC answered that it is not so much a question of whether USCB will do its job properly, but rather a recognition that its job is especially difficult, particularly in Alaska. She noted that minor errors when enumerating in remote locations can add up, leading to a significant undercount. She said the goal of outreach is to benefit Alaska by bolstering USCB's efforts.

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON noted that USCB has been conducting censuses for a very long time. She asked why there is greater concern now about the coming census than there was for past censuses.

MS. SCOVIC replied that there are "a couple layers" to that question. She spoke to widespread concerns related to distrust of government, data privacy, and online security. She said those trends lead to individual fears which manifest on the local level.

MS. WOLF added that the 2020 United States Census has been significantly underfunded on the federal level. She said USCB has been slow to mobilize. She stated that USCB's lagging potentially impacts Alaska to a greater degree than other states. She said this is part of the reason why there is more concern now than there was before.

[8:41:04 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP thanked the presenters for their presentation. He asked how USCB determines residency status.

MS. SCOVIC responded that the most basic definition is where a person spends the majority of his/her time during the year. She said this applies to seasonal workers and college students, among others. She deferred to USCB for a more thorough answer and explanation of their process.

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP asked if it may be possible for USCB to partner with the Alaska Permanent Fund Corporation (APFC). He noted that it is the most accurate dataset of all Alaskans. He noted that the permanent fund dividend (PFD) application period ends March 31 [annually]. He said law enforcement entities use that dataset when conducting an investigation. He also suggested USCB partner with the Alaska Native Corporations to acquire information about shareholders so that USCB can work from an existing dataset. He noted that there would be potential hurdles related to data sharing restrictions.

MS. SCOVIC answered that USCB has explored using administrative data to supplement its work or potentially replace its work if the data is highly accurate. She stated, "That's not where the census is today." She shared concerns that some people are missing in the PFD data. She said a "perfect tool" does not exist and cannot replace the work of USCB in capturing where people are on a certain day in time. She reiterated that USCB is looking into the potential benefits of using administrative data.

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP stated that it is difficult to incentivize people to participate in the census, but the incentives are very high for participation in the PFD.

[8:43:37 AM](#)

MS. WOLF spoke to the complex process of compiling and cross-checking names and addresses. She assured committee members that USCB does not "start from scratch" when conducting its count. She restated that there is no perfect source of population data and reiterated that for every Alaska Native person not counted, Alaska misses out on \$3,000 per year missed for a decade. She said that is why accuracy matters and why, even if the PFD data is off by 1 percent, such an undercount will compound. She noted that a complete count is mandated by the Constitution of the United States of America.

[8:45:04 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE concurred with Representative Kopp's suggestion that USCB partner with APFC. She suggested finding a way to incentivize census participation, such as a drawing for free Alaska Airlines tickets. She also suggested that USCB could partner with SOA to inexpensively facilitate translation of materials. She advocated for forming inexpensive partnerships. She relayed an anecdote about a friend from Anchor Point, Alaska, who was one of the final persons to conduct a census by dog sled in the Denali region. She discussed past census workers who were chased off people's property, illustrating the trust issues inherent in conducting a census. She said the solution was to conduct the count by dog sled and that it was an example of the USCB adapting to enumerate in the least invasive way. On the topic of trust, she stated that door knocking is not very welcome in her district and can feel like an invasion of privacy. She opined that many Alaskans do not want to share their personal information. She asked whether there are ways to show the value of census data and assure concerned Alaskans that their privacy is not being invaded.

[8:48:06 AM](#)

MS. SCOVIC responded that USCB has released a study based on research done with focus groups to assess individuals' knowledge of and barriers to the United States Census. She said one major takeaway is that people generally do not know what the United States Census is and why it is happening. She said people

generally do not understand the value of United States Census data. She added that people generally do not believe or understand that USCB is restricted from sharing personal data. She noted that it is a federal crime for a USCB official to share any personal data. Ms. Scovic addressed those barriers as the ones most vital to overcome. She spoke to the important role played by the messenger, noting that a federal mailer does not induce a great deal of trust. She remarked that it would be valuable to have a local community member who can vouch for the importance of the United States Census.

[8:49:34 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN commented that Alaskans who participate in the PFD are likely to already be responsive to the census. She opined that it is the vast majority of others who should be a cause for concern. She spoke to the difficulty of achieving an accurate count of people who may not be eligible for the PFD or are experiencing disruptions in their lives such as homelessness or mental health issues. She opined that those are the "8 percent that we're missing."

[8:51:09 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY relayed that both Governor Bill Walker and Governor Michael J. Dunleavy have issued administrative orders related to the United States Census. She asked Ms. Wolf to speak to the purpose and application of those orders.

MS. WOLF responded that the Walker Administration issued Administrative Order (AO) 301 to establish a CCC in Alaska; Ms. Wolf disclosed that she was appointed to that commission. She said Governor Walker's administrative order focused on the count itself and was connected to the Alaska Census Working Group. She said the new administrative order has "not yet met." She emphasized that it is "dramatically different." In response to Chair Zulkosky, she stated that the intent of AO 301 was to work on communication prior to the Census. In AO 301, Governor Walker cited the efforts of the Alaska Census Working Group, as well as state backing of communication outreach related to "the count." In response to a follow-up question, Ms. Wolf said she could not offer a response regarding the state's perspective of the AO issued by Governor Dunleavy; however, she said she could list the changes ordered. They include: removal of the Alaska Census Working Group as a partner; change of chair designation from the group to the governor; removal of the Alaska Municipal League (AML) appointee; call for "a mayor, a municipality, from

the state"; removal of the governor's Tribal Advisory Council recommendation seat; removal of the Regional Health Care Organization seat; removal of a seat assigned to both the House and Senate; transfer of CCC to the Department of Administration from the Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development; removal of references to timeline and expected workflow; and removal of some meeting protocol.

[8:55:00 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY recognized that different administrations have the prerogative to issue different administrative orders. Regarding accuracy and fairness in the count, she asked Ms. Wolf to speak on how structural changes of the Alaska Census Working Group might impact or change outcomes.

MS. WOLF surmised that the Special Committee on Tribal Affairs may be most concerned that the undercount occurs in rural Alaska and that with [Governor Dunleavy's] AO, there would be no representation by the group that has that area of expertise.

MS. SCOVIC elaborated on the response of Ms. Wolf by stating that AO 301 covered issues related to outreach and efforts made before the count, and she said she thinks there has been a sort of "reframing towards what happens when the count is completed and what that data is used for."

MS. WOLF added that Governor Walker's budget had included \$250,000 toward the work of the CCC. That money was taken out of [Governor Dunleavy's] budget, and \$1 million dollars was targeted toward redistricting. She concluded, "So, again, it's more about what you're going to do with the data than collecting the data itself, which was our original intent."

[8:57:29 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked whether the concern is the shift from ensuring an accurate count "from the front end throughout the process" to "focusing resources at the back end for how that information is being used."

MS. WOLF answered, "That is our understanding."

[8:58:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN assumed that under AO 303, Mr. Hunsinger was the DLWD designee for the CCC. She said there are three

other state designations. She asked whether there are any other governor-appointed members of CCC that also serve on the Alaska Census Working Group.

MR. HUNSINGER responded by offering his understanding that he is the only person who is "on both of the administrative orders" and has "participated ... to provide information and support the efforts of the working group and all Alaskans to help ensure complete counts for Alaska."

[8:59:27 AM](#)

MS. WOLF continued with the presentation. She outlined requests being made to the legislature: to build trust, by explaining to constituents the importance of the census and how the data obtained from it can create positive change; to send messages to constituents and encourage participation through the PFD application; to get word out about census staffing opportunities in each region of the state; to mobilize CCC on the local level; to advocate for state funding for communication and funding of the count; and to utilize the resources from the Alaska Census Working Group. She said the working group is doing a lot but cannot do it alone.

[9:02:38 AM](#)

MR. HUNSINGER remarked that he has not heard about any "change in focus" in relation to CCCs. Regarding the mention by Representatives Kopp and Vance of PFD data, he confirmed that USCB has been in touch with the Department of Revenue in Alaska with an Administrative Records Program providing diverse administrative data from across the country. He talked about direct response and using the PFD to get the word out about the census. To a comment made earlier by Representative Jackson, he said the Alaska Census Working Group worked with [DLWD] to ensure there were enumeration areas that were not "drastically modified." He said there had been concern about new ways to make counts that would have been detrimental to Alaska. He credited USCB for working on this issue, as well. He told Representative Jackson that "we" are concerned with USCB's investment in nonresponse follow-up. Better outreach and materials in various languages and use of USPS is needed. Many people do not respond to census outreach "in the first pass," which means USCB must go out in the field again; however, he commented that USCB may not go out as many times in 2020.

[9:06:02 AM](#)

MR. HUNSINGER related that he works with two colleagues in the department on population estimates and projections, as well as participates in census partnership programs "to ensure accurate and useful data for Alaska from the Census Borough." He said the decennial census is the most important dataset for generating statistics related to populations. He continued:

In addition to its constitutional mandate for reapportionment, it is the starting point for virtually all state and local population estimates in the country, and these estimates are used for funding allocations and the development of countless reports and statistics. I should note that [the] United States Census Borough manages many different surveys, many of which ... are ongoing. The American Community Survey is an ongoing one that we rely on and talk about a lot. But when we talk about the census [emphasis on the word "the"], we mean the decennial count of the entire U.S. population. The questionnaire for the decennial census is pretty brief, but the questionnaires must be filled in for every single household and living quarters in the country, and each of these households and living quarters must be tied to a certain place. This is a huge undertaking. The last census was 2010, of course, and the next one is 2020, so this is coming up very soon.

[9:07:21 AM](#)

MR. HUNSINGER introduced his PowerPoint presentation, entitled "2020 Census in Alaska; Overview and State Data Use." He directed attention to slide 2 of the PowerPoint, which showed publications that rely on census data, including population projections, vital statistics, jobs forecasts, crime statistics in Alaska, the American Community Survey (ACS), community database information, education statistics, and housing statistics. He said the census is often "the only reliable source of demographic and household characteristics." He said when he is called to provide data regarding age or race in a small village in Alaska, he knows that the census data is the preferred source. He continued:

Sometimes, we can rely on the American Community Survey, but due to small sample size, the data for small communities is often unreliable. Since

decennial census data should represent a complete 100 percent count, they don't have the kind of uncertainty that comes with other sources, like the American Community Survey, and it especially affects data for small communities.

MR. HUNSINGER said while PFD data is important, it does not cover everyone; many military personnel, students, and people who have recently moved to the state are not covered. This information must be used in conjunction with reliable decennial census data. He expressed hope that the following could be learned from USCB on "how things are looking" in terms of recruitment, budget, outreach, and nonresponse management, how many people will be hired, and how that compares to 2010.

[9:10:57 AM](#)

MR. HUNSINGER directed attention to slide 3 and discussed USCB's emphasis on data protection and privacy. He relayed that under Title 13 of the U.S. Code, USCB cannot release any identifiable information about individuals, households, or businesses, even to law enforcement agencies; the information may be used only for statistical purposes. He said Title 44 of the U.S. Code allows national archives and records administration to release data, individual records, for historical research only after 72 years. All Census workers take a lifetime oath to protect the personal information of individuals. Any violation comes with a penalty of up to \$250,000 or up to five years in prison.

MR. HUNSINGER talked about the recent work of USCB related to "disclosure avoidance," which he explained is the steps taken by USCB to ensure that the statistics tables it publishes do not disclose information about individuals. Those steps include "data squashing" and "fiscal noise" added for certain calculations. With the 2020 Census, USCB is planning on using a new method of disclosure avoidance, called "differential privacy." He said USCB notes that the transition to the new method is important in keeping up with new threats to data security; however, Mr. Hunsinger said it is not clear to him at this point how Alaska's data will be affected. He said many data users across the country share concerns about the new differential privacy protocol. He said USCB noted a challenge in tabulating accurate and detailed demographic and housing characteristics for American Indian and Alaska Native tribes, Alaska Native villages, associations, communities, councils, and corporations. He said Alaska is home to many communities with small populations of less than 5,000, some with less than 500.

These communities especially rely on the census, and he expressed hope that Alaska can learn more from USCB on how data quality and availability for these populations will be affected. He indicated that the question is whether USCB's attempt to protect information will result in less data or less reliable data. He said he thinks this is a topic Alaska needs to hear more about from USCB.

[9:14:24 AM](#)

MR. HUNSINGER directed attention to slide 4, entitled "2020 Census Barriers, Attitudes, and Motivators Study Survey Report." He stated concern about the hiring of census enumerators. He noted other areas of concern, including: possible impediments resulting from the difficult federal hiring process; difficulty in finding and identifying housing units in Alaska; multi-family and extended family arrangements being counted fully; distress and fatigue related to surveys, in general; and communication challenges related to language barriers.

MR. HUNSINGER talked about an analysis, which identified five barriers to census participation: concern about data privacy and confidentiality; fear of repercussion; distrust in all levels of government; the feeling that being counted doesn't matter; and the belief that completing the census might not result in personal benefit. He read a quote: "Funding by public services was a top motivator across groups; yet less than half of respondents knew that the census is used to determine community funding." He read another quote from USCB focus group research, as follows:

Typing participation in census to community funding and, by extension, the hope in a better future for younger generations was a key motivator for response. Helping people understand the purpose, the content, and the process of the census may increase their participation in the 2020 Census. Messaging is needed ... for how the census directly benefits local communities now and in the future. Providing information about the [United States] Census Bureau's data protection policy alone will not mitigate the concerns around data privacy and confidentiality. Encouraging response from trusted voices within the community may increase participation among people with the greatest distrust in government.

[9:18:23 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON offered his understanding that DLWD states that Alaska is the most migratory state; it has the most people coming and going, with about half the state's population turning over within 10 years. He asked how that affects Mr. Hunsinger's job in relation to census data.

MR. HUNSINGER replied that the department relies on information from the PFD application; however, since it takes a person one to two years to be eligible for the PFD, the department uses a "Census ratio method" to estimate household numbers throughout the state that are then adjusted to an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) dataset. Other populations affect the numbers, such as military numbers. The department uses special surveys to determine those other populations. He said, "It all hinges on the decennial census count."

[9:21:29 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND inquired how the Alaska Census Working Group will count homeless populations.

MR. HUNSINGER answered that the census will count people in "transitory locations" on a designated day. He indicated that Fairbanks, Anchorage, and Juneau have homeless counts, and that information can be provided to USCB.

[9:22:38 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY expressed her appreciation for the work of the speakers on the Census. She offered her understanding that the ACS provides economic data obtained through census data gathering.

MR. HUNSINGER confirmed that the ACS depends on the decennial census. The ACS is "weighted, adjusted to match the population estimates." Incomplete tabulation would affect a myriad of statistical information.

CHAIR ZULKOSKY recollected that following the 2010 United States Census, it had been estimated that a small community in Western Alaska had a median income of \$70,000; however, that was because all the individuals in that sample happened to be employed. She inquired about how ACS information is used.

MR. HUNSINGER responded that reliable income information is difficult to get. He said, "The sample is so small." He said

other states do not have so many populations with less than 5,000 people. Nevertheless, he said other states are also concerned about the differential privacy issue.

CHAIR ZULKOSKY explained she would like to understand how the ACS data is being used by communities and the importance of its accuracy.

MR. HUNSINGER indicated it is used by people looking for statistics related to, for example, health, crime, and employment, and other types of socio-economic data, all of which rely on a good decennial census.

[9:27:42 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked what kind of cyber-security federal government must maintain confidentiality.

MR. HUNSINGER responded that he cannot speak to the technical aspects, but he said he thinks USCB has shown that it manages sensitive data well. He responded to further questions from Representative Vance. He confirmed that the 72-year timing on holding records private has been around for a long time. He talked about available Ancestry.com records derived from Census information older than 72 years.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE shared that although she is wary of giving out information, her family benefited from information given out through an ancestry search.

MS. WOLF suggested USCB staff could answer more specific questions on the topic.

[9:32:04 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN postulated a scenario in which she was able to appropriate a million dollars to the state's budget for Census concerns, and she inquired where those funds would be best allocated.

MS. SCOVIC responded that the Alaska Census Working Group has identified a few top priority items, including: \$30,000 toward translation; providing mini-grants to communities creating CCCs; and a minimum of \$200,000 toward outreach efforts. She said those are the main components, but there are other items beyond the bare minimum budget.

MS. WOLF added that the Alaska Census Working Group has considered this question. It has heard from librarians who would create kiosks in their libraries, from local schools that would educate children about the census. She said there are many ideas that relate to the work done leading up to the census, but she thinks there is a need for resources during the census, as well. She said there are an expected 1,000 jobs during the census, but the word needs to get out, so people know about the opportunity.

[9:35:55 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN shared her concern that Alaska is "behind the curve," because the money for work ahead of the census needs to be appropriated now rather than coming from the 2020 budget. She said being frugal this year could cost the state 10 years of federal contributions to Alaskans.

[9:37:14 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON stated that federal dollars are shrinking, as well; the state is not getting as much money to complete the census as it used to receive. She said there are communities in Alaska where people intentionally live off the grid; therefore, she mused that USCB may need to hire "bounty hunters" in order to count those people. She expressed her thanks to the presenters.

[9:38:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND expressed her appreciation that work is being done with schools, because schools help with translation.

MS. WOLF stated that the hope is to work directly with schools, libraries, and Division of Elections translators.

MS SCOVIC imparted that USCB has "partnership specialists" that work in tribal and general areas to make connections with "libraries and schools and all of that."

[9:39:39 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY acknowledged the discussion related to translation support for Alaska Native languages. She asked whether she is correct in anticipating support would be needed in urban centers for "a significant immigrant population."

MS. WOLF responded, "That is correct."

[9:39:55 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON offered his understanding that the [2000] United States Census was the first in which USCB allowed individuals to delineate mixed race, and he asked whether that also was the first year that Alaska Native tribes were "part of the Census accounting process."

MR. HUNSINGER replied by offering his understanding that USCB was working with tribal governments prior to the 2000 United States Census, but he said he would have to research and follow up with an answer.

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON encouraged Mr. Hunsinger to return with that information, as well as with information pertaining to the American Census Survey or any other that help count Alaska Native tribes to further the state's understanding of their demographic profile.

MR. HUNSINGER responded that USCB works independently with tribal governments. He acknowledged that the federal government has fewer resources now, and he expressed gratitude for the work of USCB nationally.

MS. SCOVIC relayed that there had been discussion about adding a question related to tribal enrollment on the 2020 United States Census form; however, there was concern about the ambiguity of the question. For example, it could be unclear whether tribal identity meant someone is a shareholder of a regional corporation, part of a regional corporation, or may list an "ethnic connection." She said if various people answer the question in different ways, then the data would become "very messy." The Alaska Census Working Group pushed back against adding that question before it has been tested as to its helpfulness. The question will not be included on the 2020 United States Census form.

MR. HUNSINGER said USCB has been meeting with tribal governments and stakeholders on the subject.

[9:43:44 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON pointed out that question nine on "the Census test" asks the person to list his/her enrolled or

principle tribe. He remarked that that seems to contradict what the speakers just said.

MS. SCOVIC replied that "that is not actually used in things like funding formulas." For example, the Indian Housing Block Grant does not use that tribal identifier to shift funding. She stated, "It's something that's included ... for, sort of, census crosstabulations and trying to map that out but is not actually driving funding allocations the way that having a separate question, I think, would propose that it would. And so, I think that's the piece that is different." She continued:

There are still a lot of questions and a lot of outreach that we've identified around creating some sort of fact sheet that helps people understand how best to respond. So, that question's sort of an order of operations of your regional corporation versus whatever your, sort of, identifiers might be and how you answer the tribal question on there, but ... it doesn't carry the same weight.

MS. SCOVIC suggested Mr. Hunsinger could elaborate upon her answer.

MR. HUNSINGER responded that USCB must meet criteria related to race and ethnicity, but it can also attempt to gather more information that can be "useful for calculations throughout the decade." He said there have been changes in questions pertaining to race over the decades. He said, "This would have been -- what they were thinking about doing was [a] separate, additional question for tribal enrollment, and that's something that, to my knowledge, is not in the plans anymore, at all."

[9:45:47 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON asked whether the tribal funds are federally funded based on population or are simply a set amount.

CHAIR ZULKOSKY said, "That's going to change dependent on the subject area that's being funded." She offered the following explanation:

Tribal health funding is funded differently from particular block grants for, say, Native American housing, which is going to be different than social service entities that provide support for nonprofit

tribal social service entities. So, it depends on what avenue that funding is being funded through.

9:46:48 AM

CHAIR ZULKOSKY thanked the presenters.

9:47:16 AM

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs meeting was adjourned at 9:47 a.m.