



Chairman José E. Serrano
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
Department of Commerce Budget Request for FY2021
March 10, 2020

The subcommittee will come to order.

Today we welcome back the Commerce Secretary, Wilbur Ross, before the subcommittee to testify about the Commerce Department's fiscal year 2021 budget request. As we all remember, the Secretary decided not to come and visit with us last year, so I am glad there has been a change of heart. Despite your absence, we submitted questions for the record, which you returned to us just 4 days ago. This disregard for the role of Congress not only offends this Committee, but diminishes our ability to do our job. I am glad you are here today and I hope that your presence here is an indication that the Department is turning a new page.

The Department, through the Census Bureau, is in the midst of administering the 2020 Census, with most people receiving their first outreach this week. I am sure all of us here want a fair and accurate count and will likely have numerous questions about how things are going, the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on your plans, and the ongoing effects of the fight over the citizenship question. We will also want to hear more about the administrative data collection process, your commitment to privacy, and the Bureau's plans for this information.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the inadequacy of the Department's budget request in a number of important areas that have bipartisan support. I think that many of the proposed cuts in the Commerce Department's request show a disregard for the tens of millions of Americans and American businesses who are helped by these programs.

Your request once again seeks to eliminate major economic development programs like the Economic Development Administration and the Minority Business Development Agency. These agencies promote economic development in underserved areas and communities, including in many areas that voted for the President four years ago. The President's budget proposal also undermines American manufacturing by once again proposing to eliminate the Manufacturing Extension Partnership program.

In NOAA, the Administration has proposed eliminating at least 24 programs, and included significant budget cuts for programs focused on climate change research, front-line response to environmental issues at the state and local level, and educating the next generation of STEM students. These proposals

undermine the future of our Nation's scientific leadership and our ability to respond comprehensively to global climate change. That is unacceptable.

In many cases, the proposed cuts are ones that Congress has rejected in the past. We expect to have a very tight budget environment for domestic, non-defense discretionary bills this year, and given the holes that this subcommittee will need to fill, it will be hard for us to target major new budget investments requested by the Department.

I look forward to talking with you more about these issues today. With that, let me turn to Ranking Member Aderholt for any opening statement he might have.