



September 20, 2018

To: Members of the U.S. House

From: Chris Carson, President

Re: Remove the Citizenship Question from the 2020 Census

The League of Women Voters urges the U.S. House to use its oversight authority to remove the citizenship question from the 2020 Census form, as it will jeopardize the accuracy of the Census in all communities – an outcome that the nation will have to live with for the following 10 years.

Including a question pertaining to citizenship in the 2020 Census will cause participation to plummet and threaten the accuracy of the Census. Census data is not only used to draw state and congressional districts based on population, but it is also used by local governments to plan for public safety and make investments in the future of their communities. An undercount of persons in any given area could result in inadequate disaster responders, insufficient resources for transportation, education and impacts to the overall health and safety of communities.

An accurate Census count is critical to all American communities. An accurate count is too important to threaten the results with this political move. The last time the Census included a question about citizenship was in 1950. Well before the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act (VRA). There is no justification to the Department of Justice's claims that adding a citizenship question is necessary to enforce the VRA.

The harm from this decision would be irreversible. Communities that are already at greater risk of being undercounted – people of color, young children, and low-income rural and urban residents – will suffer the most. Including a citizenship question on the Census will undermine participation and threatens the overall Census process that is vital to our democracy.

A fair and accurate census is essential for all basic functions of our society. That is why including a citizenship question on the 2020 Census, when the weight of scientific evidence indicates the question will undermine a successful count of our nation's people, is a grave mistake.

It is up to Congress to exercise oversight authority over the Census Bureau and the League calls on Congress to use their power and remove the citizenship question from the 2020 Census.