



October 13, 2020

To: Members of the U.S. House and Senate

From: Virginia Kase, Chief Executive Officer

Subject: Additional funding necessary for pandemic recovery and our democratic institutions including the 2020 November election

Dear Senators and Representatives:

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to harm American communities and call attention to lasting health and economic disparities. The pandemic has touched every sector of American life and exacerbated existing threats to our democracy. In this time, Congress must fund a relief package to repair a downward turning economy, put people back on their feet after unforeseeable job and income loss, and ensure the health and safety of all communities. Congress must also ensure that key pillars of our democracy and our communities like the United States Postal Service, 2020 Census and our elections system are fully funded. There is not a moment to waste.

At a minimum, the League of Women Voters suggests that Congress allocate additional funding to address American families' basic human needs, including:

- **Healthcare access for all** by eliminating cost sharing for COVID-19 testing and treatment and ensuring pandemic treatment for sovereign tribal nations and U.S. territories.
- **Shelter and food access for all** by extending the federal moratorium on evictions, granting \$100 billion in emergency rental assistance, and increasing the maximum SNAP benefit by 15% and raising the minimum benefit to \$30/month.
- **Cushioning job loss** by renewing the \$600/week pandemic unemployment compensation and issuing a second round of economic impact payments of \$1200 for every American adult and child, including those in mixed-status families.
- **Education equity** by increasing funding for K-12 through post-secondary institutions without conditioning dollars on reopening schools.

If we want to keep our country moving forward, adequate funding is necessary to put Americans back to work; protect workers, students, and families; and ensure basic access to affordable healthcare coverage.

In addition to ensuring families meet these basic needs, there is still time to provide funding to safeguard free and fair elections. Congress must appropriate funds to:

- **Increase the health and safety of polling places** for both voters and poll workers by providing additional personal protective equipment (PPE), sanitization materials for machines and polling places to meet CDC guidelines, and additional supplies to allow voters to safely mark their ballots.
- **Conduct public education campaigns** to notify voters of the necessary changes to voting policies and practices by publishing information on their official websites and promoting these sites to voters.
- **Process all mail, absentee, early, and election day ballots** by hiring and training additional staff to participate in the counting process. Ensuring that these staff are trained properly, that they have the necessary space to count, and that they can do so efficiently will ensure an accurate count of all ballots.

Congress still has time to fund these activities as some of the bills related to the election will not come due until after the November election has concluded. Authorizing this funding will ensure voter safety, ballot access, and a reliable and accurate ballot count.

Finally, Congress must address the impacts that COVID-19 has had on two key American institutions – the 2020 Census and the United States Postal Service. The disruption to the counting process caused by COVID-19 has forced the Census Bureau to extend in-person counting operations and delay the final data report. Congress must:

- **Meet the U.S. Census Bureau's April 2020 request** and extend the statutory deadlines for data reporting by at least 120 days. This will ensure that the Bureau is able to produce accurate, high quality numbers for the apportionment process.
- **Support the painstaking, complex, and highly specialized series of activities to process and improve the raw data** once a full count is completed on October 31. In the words of the Commerce Department Inspector General, "The streamlined data processing under the accelerated census plan poses a myriad of risks to accuracy and completeness."
- **Provide \$25 billion in funding to the United States Postal Service** to ensure it can continue vital services like the delivery of prescriptions, packages and election mail. The U.S. Postal Service provides vital services to our communities and are needed now more than ever during the pandemic.



The American people haven't given up on each other; frontline and essential workers continue to heroically show up for our health and public life every day. But the chaos of this pandemic should serve as a wake-up call for our country and democracy. Congress can't give up on the American people; Legislators must take immediate steps to pass a comprehensive relief package that satisfies human needs in a COVID-19 crisis and protects our democratic institutions. If the United States is to continue serving as the world's beacon of democracy, Congress must take immediate steps to provide states with the resources necessary to conduct fair and safe elections in November and ensure a fair and accurate census.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Virginia Kase", is positioned below the word "Sincerely,". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Virginia Kase
Chief Executive Officer
League of Women Voters of the United States