



November 19, 2020

To: Members of the U.S. Senate

From: Virginia Kase, Chief Executive Officer

Subject: Extend the Statutory Reporting Deadlines of the 2020 Census

Dear Senator:

Earlier this year, the U.S. Census Bureau requested a shift to their operating and reporting deadlines in order to ensure that a full and accurate count of every community across the country could be delivered. The U.S. Census is a fundamental piece to determining the allocation of federal funding and it is instrumental in ensuring that all people in the country have equal representation. The count has been completed, but the work of the census is not yet done. The League of Women Voters urges you to adopt the Census Bureau's request to extend statutory reporting deadlines by 120 days in order to produce the necessary data files, by passing legislation in the 2020 lame duck session of Congress.

We must ensure the accuracy of the data files being developed for the 2020 Census. The data, compiled by long time career Census Bureau staff, will be instrumental to the future allocation of funds related to the pandemic and the allocation of congressional seats. In 2000 and 2010, the Census Bureau was given over 20 weeks to fully process the data, but unless Congress acts, the Census Bureau will be forced to spend just 11 weeks to process the data for a larger, more diverse population in 2020.

2020 Census data will be used to determine which communities overcome the loss of local income and economic development caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In short, it will be used to put America back on the road to recovery following a major downturn in the economy and the health of the American people. We must also ensure accuracy of the data so that every American has equal representation at the state and federal levels, when redistricting is undertaken in states across the country in 2021. The Census Bureau currently faces a December 31, 2020 statutory deadline to produce census



numbers for congressional apportionment, and an April 1, 2021 deadline to transmit redistricting data to the states. Failure to push back the statutory reporting deadlines will force the Census Bureau to cut short critical 2020 Census data processing and quality check operations from the usual five months down to only two and a half months.

Luckily, there are multiple solutions that Congress can use to fulfill their constitutional authority to extend the statutory deadlines. The U.S. House has already passed an extension of the deadlines through the HEROES Act. The Senate can pass a full and comprehensive COVID-19 relief package and extend the deadlines for the census at the same time by passing the HEROES Act. The second option is to pass bipartisan, bicameral legislation that has been introduced in the form of the 2020 Census Deadline Extensions Act (S. 4571). Bipartisan, bicameral legislation is a rarity in Congress these days. Yet with this legislation, Senators and Representatives from both parties have come together to put the needs of their states and their constituents first. The Senate must follow their lead and support the extension of the statutory deadlines.

A rushed census during a pandemic inevitably will lead to misallocation of political representation, government funding, and private sector investment in every state and community. If data processing operations are not thorough, communities most in need of resources to improve quality of life and standards of living will not receive their fair share for the next decade. Accurate data from the 2020 Census are critical to informed decision-making and resource allocation by the public and private sectors, including preparation for and recovery from natural disasters and public health crises.

The League of Women voters calls on the U.S. Senate to extend the statutory data reporting deadlines of the U.S. Census Bureau. The health of our democracy and its people depend on it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Virginia Kase", is written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

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