August 11, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-220, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Leader McCarthy:

As you work on the next legislative package to address the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we strongly urge you to extend the statutory deadlines for the delivery of apportionment data and redistricting files following the 2020 Census.

On April 13, 2020, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and Census Bureau Director Steven Dillingham announced that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they would be adjusting 2020 Census operations. At the same time, they had requested that the Congress extend the statutory deadlines “for apportionment counts to be delivered to the President by April 30, 2021, and redistricting data to be delivered to the states no later than July 31, 2021.” This would have given the Census Bureau adequate time to compile the data sets in light of the delayed enumeration window. However, the administration has reversed course and shortened the enumeration period from October 31 to September 30, 2020, citing these statutory constraints.

Career Census Bureau staff have indicated that they cannot meet the existing statutory deadlines. In May 2020, the census official leading field operations, Tim Olson, stated, “We have passed the point where we could even meet the current legislative requirement of December 31. We can’t do that anymore.” And in July, the associate director of the census, Albert Fontenot, said, “We are past the window of being able to get those counts” by year’s end.

Extending the deadlines for the delivery of these files in the next COVID-19 relief package will ensure that the Census Bureau has adequate time to complete a full, fair, and accurate 2020 Census. It will also ensure that both the Congress and the states receive accurate data for apportionment and redistricting. We thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

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BRIAN SCHATZ
United States Senator

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LISA MURKOWSKI
United States Senator
