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Advocates File Amicus with California Supreme Court, Letter Urging Extension of Redistricting Deadline

OAKLAND—Today, redistricting reform proponents, civil rights groups, and grassroots organizations from across the state filed an amicus letter in support of the California Citizens Redistricting Commission's emergency motion asking the California Supreme Court to extend the Commission's redistricting deadline in light of unprecedented Census delays.

After several delays of the release of census data, the crucial period for public input on final maps and the subsequent deadline for adoption of final maps have slipped into the heart of the winter holidays, making it harder for members of the public to engage in the redistricting process.

“Allowing key deadlines to fall over the holiday season is the functional equivalent of acting behind closed doors, which is exactly what the Voters First Act sought to end,” **said Stephanie Doute, Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of California**, who supported the Voters First Act. “Maps drawn this year determine how Californians will be represented for the next ten years—it is crucial that the California Supreme court extends commissioners time to draw maps to ensure our communities have a voice in this redistricting cycle.”

“Underrepresented communities will face a huge barrier to participation under the current deadlines. Communities deserve and have a right to fully participate in our democracy,” **said Aaron Robertson, Director of Political Voice at Advancement Project California**. “Ensuring enough time for community input in the redistricting process is imperative so that no community is disempowered for the next ten years.”

“If the Commission is forced into a holiday map adoption deadline and must make final adjustments to draft maps during the winter holidays, we anticipate many members of the community will not have time to review and provide feedback to the Commission during that critical time period,” **said Deanna Kitamura, Senior Staff Attorney for the Voting Rights Program at Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus**, which signed the letter alongside its sister organization, Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles.

“When I campaigned for redistricting reform as Governor, my vision was to bring people together across party lines to terminate gerrymandering. To fulfill this goal and to give Californians the full representation they deserve, the redistricting process must be fair and transparent. That means giving the citizen commissioners the time they deserve to make careful decisions for the people of California.” **said former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Chairman of the USC Schwarzenegger Institute for State and Global Policy.**

“California voters passed the Voters First Act to put regular Californians in the driver seat of the redistricting process. Ensuring that there are sufficient opportunities for community input at the critical final stages keeps the redistricting process in line with the spirit of the law,” **said Jonathan Mehta Stein, Executive Director of California Common Cause.** “At a time when government offices, schools, and many businesses are closed, and most Californians are enjoying time with family, public participation will be significantly depressed unless the Court grants the emergency motion.”

“The California Citizens Redistricting Commission cannot draw fair maps unless Latinos and other underrepresented communities have meaningful opportunities to have their voices heard at every point of the state’s redistricting process,” **said NALEO Educational Fund Chief Executive Officer Arturo Vargas.** “We urge the California Supreme Court to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to full community participation when the Commission is making its final and most critical decisions on the maps that will determine the contours of our representative democracy for the next ten years.”

On July 20, 2020, the California Supreme Court issued a peremptory writ of mandate to extend the Commission’s August 15, 2021 deadline to December 15, 2021, to account for the anticipated four month delay in the release of Census Bureau redistricting data. The Census Bureau subsequently released redistricting data to the states on August 12, 2021, which was 12 days later than anticipated when the Supreme Court issued its original order. Adding an additional 12 days to the redistricting process would result in a December 27, 2021, deadline.

On August 20, 2021, the California Citizens Redistricting Commission filed a motion requesting the California Supreme Court to extend the deadline for the Commission’s approval and certification of the final redistricting maps to January 14, 2022 to account for the federal delays and holidays.

The letter, prepared with assistance from attorneys at Keeker, Van Nest & Peters, can be read here: <https://bit.ly/LWVCAmicusLetterRedistricting>.

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