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SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON REDISTRICTING

December 7, 2020

Ms. Stephanie Swanson
Issue Chair of Redistricting & Census
League of Women Voters of Texas
Via email: steph.swanson.lwvtx@gmail.com

Ms. Swanson:

Thank you for your letter to the Senate Select Committee on Redistricting regarding the 2021 legislative redistricting process in Texas. You wrote on behalf of the League of Women Voters and several other organizations. The Committee welcomes and appreciates your interest, and thanks you for communicating with us regarding the critical task of redistricting.

As you know, in preparation for the 2021 redistricting cycle, this Committee developed an extensive public hearing schedule to solicit input from communities across the State during the legislative interim. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic put a stop to large public gatherings, including in-person public hearings. As your letter notes, this public health emergency has created unique and unprecedented challenges for all Texans. But these challenges will not stand in the way of a fair, legal, and open legislative redistricting process during the upcoming session.

Toward that end, the Committee has been hard at work to identify, establish, and implement alternatives to in-person field hearings for soliciting public input on the 2021 redistricting cycle. As your letter points out, one way the Committee has done this is by establishing an online public input portal. This tool allows individuals and interested parties to submit written comments and attachments for the Committee to review and consider during redistricting. These materials are distributed to each member of the Committee, and are also available to view by every other senator. The portal is available at <https://senate.texas.gov/redistrictingcomment/>, and I invite all Texans and interested parties to utilize it to contribute their comments on this very important task.

I am also pleased to announce that I intend to present a Senate resolution which would allow the Committee and other Senate members to hear live, region-specific testimony from the public virtually. This plan is currently being finalized in consultation with public health experts, legislative support staff, and Senate leadership to ensure that we protect the health and safety of the senators and the public wishing to participate, and that we act in accordance with the laws, rules, and procedures that govern Senate proceedings. I look forward to presenting this proposal to my Senate colleagues when the Legislature convenes next month, and if the plan is approved, I will share the logistical details with the

public as soon as possible. It is my hope that this will allow us to account for the unique challenges of the pandemic while maximizing opportunities for Texans throughout the State to provide their input on the upcoming redistricting cycle.

I remain dedicated to providing safe, accessible, productive, and effective avenues for Texans to make their voices heard. I will continue to do my best to maximize public participation throughout this process, in whatever forms prove to be effective and safe for both the committee members and the public. Please do not hesitate to contact my Committee office at 512-463-0493 if you have any further input or questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joan Huffman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joan Huffman
Chair, Senate Select Committee on Redistricting

CC: Phil King, Chair, House Committee on Redistricting