Getting Involved: Understanding the Process

When considering involvement in redistricting, it is important to understand how the process unfolds. While the rules and timelines vary for each state and local area, there are some common stages where the public can participate in the.

Census Data

- •It all begins after the 2020 census data is released, which is the key data used for all redistricting. The Census Bureau is typically mandated to deliver census results to the states by April 1, 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the data release deadline has been delayed. Now data will be released state-by-state throughout the month of July, with all states receiving their redistricting data by July 31, 2021.
- If community organizations are already engaging in census outreach, they can begin engaging neighbors now. Collecting stories, issues, and contact information is a way to start preparing for redistricting.

Public Hearings

•The redistricting body, whether a legislature or some form of commission, will likely announce its process and public hearing dates. This is may be done without much notice or not made widely known. Staying attentive to the decision makers is important. The hearings are an opportunity for community members to tell their stories and present a case for keeping their communities united. There may be hearings before any draft maps are displayed.

Draft Maps

• Depending on the rules, draft maps may be released with an opportunity to comment on them before any votes are taken to adopt a final map. Having access to the map as well as the underlying data will be important to analyzing the map. Some of the things to consider are whether the maps incorporated community suggestions, respected neighborhood areas, and adhered to the Voting Rights Act and other redistricting criteria.

Map Approval

- If there is a legislative redistricting process, directly advocating and educating the decision makers can take place.
- •After the maps are approved, they can be assessed for potential legal challenges. If the maps are unsatisfactory, and a case can be made that they violate the Voting Rights Act, they can be challenged in the courts.

Elections with New Maps

•The new maps will be used in the following elections for the next ten years. The long-lasting effects of redistricting is one of the most important reasons for communities to be involved.