



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®]
OF THE UNITED STATES

February 10, 2009

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The Honorable Joe Lieberman
The Honorable Susan Collins
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman and Madam Ranking Member:

The League of Women Voters strongly supports S. 160, the District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act of 2009, and we urge the Committee to report the legislation this week. American citizens living in our nation's capital are treated uniquely – required to pay federal taxes but provided no voting representation in Congress. We strongly urge the committee to correct this injustice.

S. 160 provides voting representation in the House of Representatives for D.C. citizens by expanding the size of the House to 437 members, with the state of Utah gaining the other additional seat until reapportionment after 2010. This assures voting rights for District citizens without upsetting the partisan balance of the House. It also addresses the concern that Utah was not treated fairly in the 2000 reapportionment process. The legislation applies only to the House of Representatives and does not affect the composition of the Senate.

While some question the constitutional basis for S. 160, we believe that Article I, Section 8, particularly the "District Clause," provides ample authority, and that court precedents support our view. In any case, with court review expected, we ask that constitutional concerns not become a subterfuge for those who oppose providing voting representation to D.C. citizens.

Over the last 220 years, the principle that all citizens are entitled to a vote in their national government has emerged as a cornerstone of American democracy. Although relatively few Americans were entitled to vote in the early days of the Republic, virtually all restrictions on the franchise have since been eliminated, including those based on race, sex, wealth, and property ownership. Americans living in the nation's capital deserve to have voting representation in the Congress that makes their laws, taxes them and can call them to war.

Americans have espoused and fought for democracy across the globe. We urge the Committee to join that fight by reporting S. 160 to the Senate.

Sincerely,

Mary G. Wilson, President