

## Redistricting and the Census Delays: What It Means for Municipal Elections

Data from the 2020 U.S. Census will be delayed, meaning local elections for cities and towns which choose council members by true electoral districts will face significant issues for the upcoming 2021 elections. Even those municipalities in which council members are selected at-large, and not by district, could see delays in scheduled elections or increased election costs, depending on how these data delays are ultimately addressed.

**Consideration of voter interest and election fairness should be the highest priority in determining how best to address the effects of data delays on local elections, not administrative ease that automatically results in one-size-fits-all solutions.**

Here is why this delay in data will lead to some level of disruption in some 2021 municipal elections:

- ❑ The U.S. Constitution requires all true electoral districts to be redrawn following each Census to correct population imbalances.
- ❑ With the Census data not expected to be reported before Sept. 30, cities with true electoral district representation simply will not have enough time to redraw districts and complete elections processes. The local redistricting process alone typically takes about 16 weeks; the State Board of Elections has stated that it ideally requires another two months to implement those changes; candidate filing typically lasts three weeks, with campaigning to follow before the first election.
- ❑ Because election delays are inevitable in some cities and towns, other municipalities in the same counties could be forced into the same delays or be required to absorb more election costs.
- ❑ The N.C. General Assembly likely will act to address some aspects of the situation. Meanwhile, the State Board of Elections recommended a uniform solution of moving all municipal elections to 2022.



Delaying local elections into 2022 will create numerous problems. They include the need to extend existing board members' terms; delays in bond issuance and ABC votes; election administration complications as delayed races are forced into a 2022 elections calendar that may differ significantly from typical municipal elections calendars; and extended election ballots that may confuse voters or lead to voters having less information about municipal races.

**Keeping these complications in mind, solutions that offer the least disruption and confusion for voters will prove best for cities and towns. Targeted solutions for affected cities and towns are likely to create the least disruption and confusion for voters.**