

Equal Voices Act Summary

In theory, the fundamental promise of our democracy rests upon trust that the government fulfills the will of the people.

In recent years, we have seen that faith erode as reactionaries have manipulated the counter-majoritarian institutions of our political system, including disproportionate seat allocations in the House of Representatives and votes in the Electoral College.

The US population has grown more than threefold, and our electorate has changed significantly in the past century. Yet the size of the House has remained frozen at 435 since 1911, forcing Members to represent 3.5 times as many people and voices today compared to a century ago.

The Equal Voices Act directs that, after the next Census, the size of each Congressional District be limited to approximately 500,000 people. The bill also includes the option for states with populations which do not neatly fit into 500,000-person districts to opt to create multi-member districts using ranked choice voting. This model allows constituents in larger districts to have representation which more closely matches their interests.

This bill will increase the responsiveness of Members of Congress to their constituents, bring the relative power of states more in line with their populations, and rebalance our Electoral College to be more reflective of the popular vote.

If this bill had been enacted after the 2020 Census, the House would have grown to roughly 663 seats.

Equal Voices Act Section-by-Section

Section 1: Short Title; Findings

- Short title shall be the “Equal Voices Act.”
- Congressional Findings related to representation and population.

Section 2: Establishment of Number of Members of House of Representatives

- Amends “An Act to provide for the fifteenth and subsequent decennial census and to provide for apportionment of Representatives in Congress” from 1929 to establish that the size of the House shall be adjusted such that each state is divided into districts of 500,000 people.
- Makes conforming amendments to US Code.
- This section will go into effect for the next reapportionment following enactment of the bill.

Section 3: Optional Use of Multi-Member Districts

- Establishes that states may opt to create fewer, multi-member districts instead.
- If a state chooses to create multimember districts, the state shall ensure that districts have equal population per Representative as nearly as practicable, in accordance with the Constitution of the United States.
- Makes conforming amendments to the US Code.
- This section will go into effect for the next reapportionment following enactment of the bill.

Section 4: Optional Use of Ranked Choice Voting by States Option to Use Multi-Member Districts

- Establishes that states which opt to create multi-member districts may use ranked-choice voting to elect Representatives.
- Establishes guidelines for states to create ballots for ranked choice voting elections
- Establishes guidelines for tabulation of ranked choice voting ballots, including treatment of process for elimination of candidates and treatment of ties.
- Defines terms used to describe the ranked choice voting process

Section 5: Commission to Recommend Number of Members of House of Representatives in Event of Significant Population Change

- Establishes that in the event that the formula laid out in Section 2 calls for a change in the size of the House that is 15% greater or less than the size of the House at the time, a Commission shall be formed to identify the optimal size of the House and apportionment of seats.
 - The Commission will consist of 15 members, chosen by the Speaker of the House (5 members), the Minority Leader of the House (5 members), the Majority Leader of the Senate (2 members), the Minority Leader of the Senate (2 members), and a Chair chosen by the 14 appointed members.
 - The members must be qualified based on their expertise in politics and government, and their ability to work in a nonpartisan manner.
 - Appointments must be made within 30 days of the transmission of Census data to Congress.
 - The Commission shall analyze the population shifts and the implementation of Section 2 and recommend the optimal size of the House that reduces disparities in the size of Congressional districts and does not disenfranchise the representation of historically underrepresented populations. The Commission will issue a report with its recommendations within 6 months of the publication of the Census.
 - Lays out the administrative authorities for the commission related to compensation, staff, experts and consultants, hearings, subpoena power, and access to legislative branch services.
- This section will go into effect for the second reapportionment following enactment of the bill, so that the size of the House can grow more than 15% in the first reapportionment to better reflect the growth of the US population since the size of the House was capped in 1911.

Section 6: Authorization of Appropriations

- Authorizes such sums as necessary to provide for additional space, facilities, personnel, and other resources that may be required for a change in the size of the House.