

2020 VOTER ACTION TOOLKIT

MICHIGAN



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NARF
2020 Voter Action Toolkit
Michigan

Earlier this year, the Native American Rights Fund released, [“Obstacles at Every Turn: Barriers to Political Participation Faced by Native American Voters,”](#) a report that outlined the many challenges our Native community faces at the polls.

The 2020 Election stands to be one of the most challenging elections faced by Native American voters yet. With Native voters facing a global pandemic, mail in voting challenges, active voter suppression and intimidation efforts, and swirling disinformation campaigns from actors foreign and domestic, empowering Native people with information to break down barriers and get connected to resources to safely and securely use their democratic right to vote is more urgent than ever.

This Native Voter Action Toolkit is intended to help you speak with your community about the challenges Native voters face, but also motivate people to get proactive about making a voting plan for the 2020 election. Our vote matters and our voice is needed more than ever to shape the future.

What’s Included:

[Key Messages for Native American Voters](#)

[Barriers Facing Native American Voters in Michigan in 2020](#)

[How to Address Barriers in the 2020 Election](#)

[How to Fight Disinformation in 2020 Election](#)

[Trusted Sources for Voting Information in 2020 Elections](#)

[Communications about the 2020 Election and Informing Native American Voters](#)

[Sample Social Media Posts](#)

[Sample Text Messages](#)

[Sample Posters and Signage](#)

[Field Organizer Talking Points](#)

Key Messages for Native American Voters

Increasing the participation of Native Americans in the voting process is one of the key pillars of our democracy and of reclaiming our power. There are over 4.7 million eligible Native voters over the age of 18+. The Native vote can and has made a difference. For example, in 2006, U.S. Senator John Tester (D-Montana) won his Senate seat over the Republican incumbent candidate by only 3,562 votes. In that election, more than 17,000 voters cast ballots on

Montana's seven Indian reservations. Again in 2012, Senator Tester was re-elected by a narrow margin with the power of the Native Vote. Our vote is our power, and we need to ensure that every Native vote counts. Below are key messages you can help share with your communities.

- In the United States, power is available *through* participatory democracy. If Native Americans can engage fully in the political system—free from the barriers that currently obstruct us—we can reclaim power and participate in a way that is fair and just.
- Native American voters have the potential to become potent political forces. Only 66% of the eligible Native American voting population is registered to vote.
 - There are over 1,000,000 eligible Native Americans voters (18+) in the United States who are not registered.
- Make a plan! There are active forces working against Black, Indigenous, and People of Color to keep us from voting. They know the power we hold. Together, we must ensure that EVERY Native vote counts!
 - [Check your registration status](#) - Make sure you are registered and ready to vote
 - Know how you will plan to vote - by mail or in person- 2020's election may look different than previous years. Look up information about how to vote by contacting [Michigan's Secretary of State Office](#) or going to [NativeVote.org](#). In Michigan, you can vote on Election Day when all polls will remain open from 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM. You can vote before Election Day by mail or in person.
 - Embrace your power, get out the Native Vote 2020!

Barriers Facing Native American Voters in Michigan in 2020

Native American voters face significant barriers to using their right to vote. We've outlined the known barriers and things to watch out for in the 2020 Election. These barriers can prevent many from casting a vote or even having it counted, if they are able to vote. One of the most important ways to ensure your vote counts: have a voting plan ahead of November 3rd!

Known barriers facing Native voters in 2020:

- Lack of pre-election information and outreach
 - Find out if tribal offices are closed, or how to get information ahead of time. Digital resources like [NativeVote.org](#) can help.
 - Check if your polling locations have moved, or if your state offers absentee or mail-in voting, request your ballot now. All registered voters should have received an application for a mail-in ballot in the mail. You can also download one or apply [here](#).
- Unequal access to in-person voting
 - Polls may be closed due to COVID-19, or other voter suppression efforts.
 - Look up your options at your state's election office.
- Unequal access to early voting
 - Native American voters will face more challenges using vote by mail due to USPS mail delays, rural post offices, or slow mail routes.

- Distant rural post offices, slow mail routes, too few PO boxes
 - Many Native American communities are rural or remote. Many people may not receive mail to their home address, and therefore may need to drive miles to get access to mail.
- Voter intimidation or suppression
 - Multiple federal statutes prohibit voter intimidation. Under federal law, it is a crime to intimidate, threaten, or coerce a person, or attempt to do so, for the purpose of interfering with their right to vote or vote as they may choose. State laws also provide additional protection against voter intimidation.
 - There are active disinformation campaigns that claim local law enforcement will “monitor” the vote. This is voter suppression and intimidation. While there are many disinformation campaigns designed to discourage Natives from voting, our ancestors worked for the right to vote so we could have the power to do the same. Be safe. Be strong. It’s your right to vote.
 - If you suspect or witness voter intimidation, contact vote@narf.org or 866-OUR-VOTE.
- Concerns around the security of vote by mail
 - Due to active disinformation efforts, people may be concerned about their personal information being shared with government or law enforcement agencies. There is no widespread evidence of mail-in voter fraud or security.
- Failure to count ballots cast out-of-precinct, or concern about having votes not counted
 - The prevention of using ballot gathering, collection or canvassing to help voters in rural communities cast their vote is an attempt at Native Voter suppression. Particularly, for those who do not wish to compromise their health during a global pandemic.
 - Unfounded claims of wide-spread mail in voter fraud, meaning that votes will be thrown out. There is no widespread evidence of voter fraud.

If you’re voting in Michigan, you must:

- You may register to vote on Election Day at your city or township clerk’s office **NOT** at your polling place. Bring proof of residence that includes your name and address. Any of the following are valid but this is not a complete list:
 - A Michigan driver’s license or state ID card
 - Current utility bill
 - Bank statement
 - Paycheck
 - Government check
 - Other government document
- You may only register in person with your city or township clerk between October 20 and November 3.
- Request your vote by mail ballot by October 30 by 5:00 PM through the [Michigan Voter Information Center](#).
- Mail your ballot with a postmark by November 2nd.

- Register early if you want to save time on Election Day. If you are registering online, by mail, or through a voter registration drive (any method other than in person at the local city or township's office), you must register by **October 19, 2020**.
- Find your polling place at the [Michigan Voter Information Center](#).
- Bring a photo ID to the polls, but the ID does not need to include an address.
- Ask for a provisional ballot if you registered before the deadline but the poll worker tells you you're not on the list.

How to Address Barriers in the 2020 Election

The most important way to address the barriers facing Native American voters in 2020 is to encourage people to make a voting plan. Laws are changing rapidly and access to mail in voting or shifting polling places are adding even more barriers and challenges to Native voters. Below is information you can use to inform your communities about how to make a voting plan.

- Make a plan.
 - Check your [voter registration status](#).
 - Know how you're going to vote.
 - Does your state offer absentee or mail in ballot options? If so, request your ballot and vote early.
 - If you prefer to vote in person, know your polling place. Find state-specific voting information at the [Michigan Secretary of State's Office](#), [NativeVote.org](#) or [Vote.org](#).
 - Check the latest state laws and rules on the [Michigan Secretary of State website](#).
 - Research candidates and initiatives before voting.
 - Organize transportation to polling places¹.
 - On election day, make sure to bring a photo ID and follow CDC and tribal-approved COVID-19 protocols.
- Avoid these common vote by mail issues.
 - Take time to do a good signature. Some ballots are challenged because the signature may not match the one on file.
 - Sign in the right spot. Some voters write their name where it says "sign" and sign where it says "write your name."
 - Sign the ballot envelope.
 - Don't seal the envelope with tape. Ensure it is properly sealed.
 - Add a postage stamp, if it's required.
- Vote early if voting by mail.
 - The USPS is experiencing delays, particularly in rural communities. If you plan to vote by mail, don't wait until the last minute and vote early.
- Stay informed.

¹ Note that state laws bar any spending on transportation to the polls unless you are physically unable to walk to the polls.

- Voting laws are changing rapidly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and challenges to existing state laws. Stay informed about how to vote safely and securely in your state by checking with your [Secretary of State's Office](#) or at [NativeVote.org](#).

How to Fight Disinformation in 2020 Election

Voter misinformation and disinformation plays a role in any election, but in 2020 there are many more active efforts working to keep Black, Indigenous, and People of Color from voting. Whether it's through social media, text messages, mail, or through conversations in the community, we need our Native community to be proactively learning how to spot and fight disinformation before it spreads.

- Learn how to spot disinformation
 - If you can't verify it - don't share it!
 - Be skeptical
 - If someone claims to have "insider knowledge" or information, it could be disinformation.
 - Look at the original post and see if it's still there or if it has been removed.
 - Consider the source
 - Does the information have a verifiable source?
 - Can you find information on more than one news or information place?
 - If someone is referenced as an expert, Google them to confirm.
 - Beware of the "copy and paste and pass it on" posts
 - "Copy and paste this post and pass it on!" is a red flag that the post's origin is being deliberately obscured.
 - Try looking up key words or terms to confirm its accuracy
 - Double check ALL voting related information, regardless of source
 - Voting laws are changing rapidly in 2020.
 - Even if something may be right for one person, it may not be right for you.
 - Watch out for false equivalence
 - Be wary of any "both sides" posts or memes!
 - If someone is sharing something about an issue you are not familiar with, look at reliable sources to determine the facts of each "side."

Trusted Sources for Voting Information in 2020 Elections

It's important that we encourage people to check with verifiable sources to get their voter information. As you work with your Tribal and Native communities to make a plan to vote, you can use these trusted sources for voting information.

- Find voting rules in your state from the Secretary of State's office to check your registration, request an absentee ballot, find your polling place and more.

- Michigan - <https://www.michigan.gov/sos/>
- General Voting Resources:
 - Vote.org
 - NCAI.org
 - [Native Vote – Every Native Vote Counts](#)
 - [We Can Vote](#) - Voter information state by state
 - [Get to the Polls](#) - Locate your polling place
 - [I am a voter.](#)
- USPS on Election Mail: [Election Mail](#)

Communications about the 2020 Election and Informing Native American Voters

We need ALL our Tribal communities working together to get our Native American relatives and neighbors, accurate, trusted, and motivating information to get people out to vote! Below we've outlined some sample social media posts, social media graphics, text messages, and links to posters and signage that you can use to help people make a plan and stay informed.

In addition to this toolkit and resources available through NARF, we recommend also checking out NCAI's national effort to get out the Native Vote in 2020: Every Native Vote Counts! At NativeVote.org

Sample Social Media Posts

[\[DOWNLOAD SOCIAL MEDIA GRAPHICS\]](#)

Facebook

Why we need to vote in 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In the United States, power is available through participatory democracy. If Native Americans can engage fully in the political system—free from the barriers that currently obstruct them—they can reclaim power and participate in America in a way that is fair and just. #NativeVote ● Your vote counts – make a difference at the ballot box and at the heart of your community. If Native Americans engage fully in the political system—free from the barriers that currently obstruct us—we can reclaim power and participate in America in a way that is fair and just.
Barriers in our way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This election, Native voters face more challenges in voting than ever before. There are forces actively working to keep Native people from voting - that's how much our vote

	<p>matters. Because our vote is powerful. We encourage you to use your vote and voice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native American voters are facing many challenges this election. From COVID-19 to vote by mail to changing polling locations to active disinformation. This election, we call on you to make your voting plan and get informed about how to stay informed about the latest in the 2020 election at this trusted resource: Nativevote.org
Making a plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you made your voting plan for November 3rd? If you're voting by mail, request your ballot and vote early. If you're voting in person, do you have a mask and transportation plan ready? • This election, let's make sure EVERY Native vote counts. Make your plan and get prepared for how you'll vote this November!
Staying informed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With COVID-19, many laws and rules about voting in the 2020 Election are changing. Stay informed about the latest state laws and regulations by checking with your local election office. #NativeVote #VoteReady
How to identify disinformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are active efforts to confuse, distract, and keep people from voting. If you can't verify it - don't share it. Use these tips to avoid spreading disinformation! • Be an informed voter! Watch out for disinformation and stay skeptical. When in doubt, be skeptical and ask questions - do I know this source? Can I verify the information is true? What do official voter resources say? We need to make EVERY Native vote count!

Twitter

Why we need to vote in 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simply put: the first people on the land should not be the last to vote. The 2020 Election is perhaps the most important of our lifetime. Use your voice and your vote. #NativeVote • We must take action at every level of government to allow equitable participation in the political process for Native Americans. We must make every #NativeVote count.
Barriers in our way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native Americans face barriers at every point in the political process, including casting their ballots. 2020 continues to present even more challenges to the #NativeVote. • It is imperative we take action to ensure the first people on this land are not the last to vote. Help your family members

	and neighbors get registered, make a plan, and vote! #NativeVote
Making a plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulties in voting—the very foundation of democracy—are not new for Native Americans. But just as it is not new, this problem is also not unsolvable. Make sure you have a voting plan for this election! #NativeVote • Whether casting your ballot through the mail or in person, make sure you have what you need to make your vote count this November. Starting making your voting plan now! #NativeVote #VoteReady
Staying informed (per state)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There's a lot of disinformation and misinformation on the internet. Be skeptical about what you read - stay informed by visiting trusted and official sources for information on what's happening in Michigan. Visit for the latest election information: https://www.michigan.gov/sos/.
How to identify disinformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be an informed voter. Beware of disinformation, check trusted sources, and be skeptical. And always check the latest voter laws and rules with your local election officials. #NativeVote #VoteReady • Don't be a disinformation spreader! If you can't source it, you can't trust it. This election, we know misinformation and disinformation are trying to keep Native people from voting - it's your right and your vote. #NativeVote

Instagram

Why we need to vote in 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the United States, power is available through participatory democracy. If Native Americans can engage fully in the political system—free from the barriers that currently obstruct them—they can reclaim power and participate in America in a way that is fair and just. #NativeVote • Simply put: the first people on the land should not be the last to vote. The 2020 Election is perhaps the most important of our lifetime. Use your voice and your vote. #NativeVote
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Frequently Used Hashtags

- #NativeVote
- #WhyIVote (campaign)
- #IndianCountryCounts
- #ProtectOurVote
- #VoteReady
- #Vote2020
- #VoteByMail
- #ElectionProtection

Sample Text Messages

- Hi, this is [NAME] from [Tribe, or Field Organizing Organization]. Have you made your voting plan? It's more than ever we vote - and vote safely. Find accurate voter information at NativeVote.org.
- Hi, this is [NAME] from [Tribe, or Field Organizing Organization]. Getting ready to make your voting plan? Make sure you check the latest voting information at NativeVote.org, or at the local election office.

Sample Posters and Signage

[\[DOWNLOAD POSTERS\]](#)

Field Organizer Talking Points

- Introduce yourself! (Share where you are from, and which tribe/communications/organization you are with.)
- I'm working/volunteering to empower the Native Vote for the November 3, 2020 Election.
- The Election is XX days away! Voting is one of the most powerful things you can do for yourself, family, community, and state in 2020.
- We know the challenges of 2020 from the pandemic, the Civic Right Reckoning, and the impacts of the Climate Crisis, voting is an opportunity to use your power.
- When you make a plan to vote, you are more likely to end up voting. For example:
 - Are you registered?
 - Have you decided if you're voting in person or by mail?
 - Offer state specific resources
- Are there other eligible voters in your household or family who you can help make a plan?