

August 12, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Senate Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
House Republican Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Republican Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Schumer, and Leaders McCarthy and McConnell:

***We, the undersigned tribal organizations, strongly endorse the Frank Harrison, Elizabeth Peratrovich, and Miguel Trujillo Native American Voting Rights Act of 2021 (NAVRA). No bill goes further to protect Native voting rights in upcoming election cycles.***

NAVRA seeks to address the most egregious inequities faced by our communities when attempting to vote. As tribal organizations and organizations dedicated to getting out the Native vote, we have witnessed firsthand the unreasonable barriers that hinder Native Americans' ability to cast a ballot.

These obstacles faced by our communities are [extensively documented\\*](#). Too often, our tribal citizens are forced to travel far from our communities to vote. Often our homes are not addressed which makes registering difficult and error prone. Our homes may not receive residential mail delivery which makes picking up and dropping off a ballot difficult. And yet, our communities have less access to ballot drop boxes, registration opportunities, or polling sites.

\* Links to: <https://vote.narf.org/obstacles-at-every-turn/>

We have also borne historical and ongoing racial discrimination by local and state officials. The Montana Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights recently determined a Montana election law passed in 2021 was “intentional discrimination” against Native Americans. This past election, in Arizona, election officials spent over \$180,000 fighting against an on-reservation polling place. And indeed, throughout Indian Country, our communities face racism and hostility when visiting towns bordering the reservation. We do not want to face cold stares and snide remarks when casting our ballots, never mind rules rigged against us. We need federal protections from this abuse that hinders the ability for our communities to vote.

The Native vote matters and when these barriers are removed Native Americans do vote. When provided on reservation access, voter turnout has increased upwards of 30%. As Native organizations dedicated to increasing Native American turnout, we need NAVRA to implement consistent federal standards that are fair and equitable.

Congress has declared that “the right of citizens of the United States to vote is a fundamental right”, and “it is the duty of the Federal, State, and local governments to promote the exercise of that right.” National Voter Registration Act of 1993, 52 U.S.C. § 20501(a)(1) and (a)(2). Native Americans are American citizens and we are entitled to vote with the same ease as other Americans. Additionally, the federal government has a solemn and distinct obligation under its trust responsibility to pass legislation that applies to Indian lands. Congress must take up for consideration and pass NAVRA to begin to address the urgent barriers that hinder our communities. As tribal organizations, we believe every American, including Native Americans, deserves a true and meaningful opportunity to vote.

For all of the aforementioned reasons, the undersigned tribal organizations express strong support for NAVRA, and recommend it be included in any legislation passed by Congress that affects voting rights.

Please reach out to Jacqueline De León, [jdeleon@narf.org](mailto:jdeleon@narf.org), NARF Staff Attorney, to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

Native American Rights Fund

National Congress of American Indians

Inter Tribal Association of Arizona

Alaska Federation of Natives

Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians

Coalition of Large Tribes

Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes

United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund

Advance Native Political Leadership

California Native Vote Project

New Mexico Native Vote

North Dakota Native Vote

Four Directions

Las Vegas Indian Center

National Indian Education Association

NDN Collective

Sacred Pipe Resource Center

Tribal Minds, Inc.

United Natives