



Native Language Speakers Have Voting Rights!

In Indian Country, our votes impact our community resources, and whether elected officials respect Native people and Native rights. It is essential that people who speak our traditional languages have a say. That is why section 203 of the Voting Rights Act requires nearly one hundred voting areas or “jurisdictions” across the country to provide language assistance to speakers of traditional Native languages.

WHAT IS REQUIRED?

Federal law requires that Native language speakers who are not comfortable speaking and reading in English receive language assistance so they may effectively participate in voting. Election officials cannot provide less election information to Native language speaking voters than they provide to English-speaking voters.

LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE SHOULD INCLUDE:

- ✓ Translation of election information on websites
- ✓ Translation of voter guides and other written materials
- ✓ Translation of voter registration forms and ballots
- ✓ Language assistance by phone and where you go to cast your vote (your “polling location”)



LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE IS REQUIRED FOR SPEAKERS OF THE FOLLOWING LANGUAGES:

- | | | | |
|---------------------|------------|-------------|----------|
| • Alabama-Coushatta | • Ho-Chunk | • Nez Perce | • Yup'ik |
| • Aluet | • Hopi | • Paiute | • Zuni |
| • Apache | • Inupiat | • Seminole | |
| • Choctaw | • Kickapoo | • Shoshone | |
| | • Navajo | • Ute | |

NATIVE LANGUAGE RIGHTS WIN IN COURT!

Election officials provided a 100-page election pamphlet for English-speaking voters but, for Alaska Native language speakers, only provided a one-page document with the date, time, and location of the election and a notice that language assistance was available. In a lawsuit brought by NARF, a federal court ruled that this was a violation of section 203 of the Voting Rights Act because Native language speakers were provided less election information than English Speakers.

FOR QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT [VOTE@NARF.ORG](mailto:vote@narf.org)

WHERE IS LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE REQUIRED?

“Covered jurisdictions” must provide language assistance. A federal agency called the Census Bureau determines which voting jurisdictions are covered jurisdictions. To make its determinations the Census Bureau looks at “language-minority” populations in each jurisdiction (or in Alaska Native areas or tribal lands lying wholly or partially in a jurisdiction) and considers two things:

- ✓ The size of the language minority population that is not proficient in English; and
- ✓ Below average literacy rates to recognize the impacts of discrimination in education on access to voting

All covered jurisdictions are listed in Federal Regulation at 86.F.R. 69611.

A NOTE ABOUT “HISTORICALLY UNWRITTEN” NATIVE LANGUAGES:

Many Native languages are historically unwritten, as our cultures are rooted in oral traditions. Under section 203, if a Native language is determined to be historically unwritten (a case-by-case determination) jurisdictions may not have to provide *written* translations of all materials written in English. However, federal courts have determined that written translations may be required if needed to provide complete, accurate, and uniform translations. Additionally, language assistance must still allow Native-language speakers to *effectively* participate in voting and election officials cannot make less information available for Native-language speakers than they do for English-speakers.

The remainder of this guide lists the voting areas or “jurisdictions” that are required to provide language assistance, by language. Language assistance must allow members of your community who are not comfortable using English to effectively participate in elections and cast an informed vote. If you think your community’s right to language assistance has been violated, reach out to vote@narf.org.

The list of jurisdictions that are required to provide language assistance is updated every five years. Jurisdictions with an asterisk (*) are newly covered jurisdictions, meaning they were not on the list of covered jurisdictions in 2016, but were added in 2021.

For jurisdictions in *bold italics*, the federal government may not prioritize enforcement of language assistance obligations because census data indicate few tribal members live on tribal lands within those jurisdictions.

ALABAMA-COUSHATTA:

Alabama-Coushatta speakers are entitled to language assistance in

- ✓ Polk County, Texas*

ALUET:

Aluet speakers are entitled to language assistance in

- ✓ Lake and Peninsula Borough, Alaska*

APACHE:

Apache speakers are entitled to language assistance in

- ✓ Gila County, Arizona
- ✓ *Pinal County, Arizona*
- ✓ Graham County, Arizona

CHOCTAW:

Choctaw speakers are entitled to language assistance in

- ✓ *Attala County, Mississippi*
- ✓ *Carroll County, Mississippi**
- ✓ *Jackson County, Mississippi*
- ✓ Jones County Mississippi
- ✓ Kemper County, Mississippi
- ✓ Leake County, Mississippi
- ✓ Neshoba County, Mississippi
- ✓ Newton County, Mississippi
- ✓ Noxubee County, Mississippi
- ✓ *Scott County, Mississippi*
- ✓ Winston County, Mississippi

HO-CHUNK:

Ho-Chunk speakers are entitled to language assistance in

- ✓ *Houston County, Minnesota**
- ✓ Adams town, Wisconsin"
- ✓ *Albion town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ *Bangor town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ Birnamwood town, Wisconsin*
- ✓ *Black River Falls city, Wisconsin**
- ✓ Byron town, Wisconsin*
- ✓ *Cranmoor town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ Dellona town, Wisconsin*
- ✓ Delton town, Wisconsin*
- ✓ *Dewhurst town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ *Eaton town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ *Elderon town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ *Ferryville village, Wisconsin**
- ✓ *Franzen town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ *Freeman town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ *Friendship village, Wisconsin**
- ✓ *Germania town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ *Germantown town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ *Greenfield town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ *Holland town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ Komensky town, Wisconsin*
- ✓ La Grange town, Wisconsin*
- ✓ Lemonweir town, Wisconsin*
- ✓ *Leon town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ *Levis town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ Lydon town Wisconsin*
- ✓ *Madison city, Wisconsin**
- ✓ *Manchester town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ *Mead town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ *Millston town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ *Oakdale town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ *Onalaska town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ Port Edwards town, Wisconsin*
- ✓ *Preston town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ *Reid town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ Seneca town, Wisconsin*
- ✓ *Seven Mile Creek town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ *Stark town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ *Sumpter town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ *Whitestown town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ *Wilson town, Wisconsin**
- ✓ Wittenberg village, Wisconsin*
- ✓ *Wittenberg town, Wisconsin**

HOPÍ:

Hopi speakers are entitled to language assistance in

- ✓ Coconino County, Arizona*
- ✓ Navajo County, Arizona*

INUPIAT:

Inupiat speakers are entitled to language assistance in

- ✓ North Slope Borough, Alaska
- ✓ Northwest Atlantic Borough, Alaska
- ✓ Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area, Alaska

KICKAPOO:

Kickapoo speakers are entitled to language assistance in

- ✓ Maverick County, Texas

NAVAJO:

Navajo speakers are entitled to language assistance in

- ✓ Apache County, Arizona
- ✓ Coconino County, Arizona
- ✓ Navajo County, Arizona
- ✓ Bernalillo County, New Mexico
- ✓ Cibola County, New Mexico
- ✓ McKinley County, New Mexico
- ✓ Rio Arriba County, New Mexico
- ✓ Sandoval County, New Mexico
- ✓ San Juan County, New Mexico
- ✓ Socorro County, New Mexico
- ✓ San Juan County, Utah

NEZ PERCE:

Nez Pierce speakers are entitled to language assistance in

- ✓ Clearwater County, Idaho*
- ✓ Idaho County, Idaho*
- ✓ Lewis County, Idaho*
- ✓ Nez Pierce County, Idaho*

PAIUTE:

Paiute speakers are entitled to language assistance in

- ✓ *Coconino County, Arizona**
- ✓ Mohave County, Arizona*

SEMINOLE:

Seminole speakers are entitled to language assistance in

- ✓ Glades County, Florida*

SHOSHONE:

Shoshone speakers are entitled to language assistance in

- ✓ Nye County, Nevada*

UTE:

Ute speakers are entitled to language assistance in

- ✓ *La Plata County, Colorado*
- ✓ Montezuma County, Colorado
- ✓ *San Juan County, New Mexico*
- ✓ San Juan County, Utah

YUP'IK:

Yup'ik speakers are entitled to language assistance in

- ✓ Aleutians East Borough, Alaska
- ✓ Bethel Census Area, Alaska
- ✓ Bristol Bay Borough, Alaska
- ✓ Dillingham Census Area, Alaska
- ✓ Kenai Peninsula Borough, Alaska
- ✓ Kodiak Island Borough, Alaska
- ✓ Kuslivak Census Area, Alaska*
- ✓ Lake and Peninsula Borough, Alaska
- ✓ Nome Census Area, Alaska

ZUNI:

Zuni speakers are entitled to language assistance in

- ✓ *Apache County, Arizona**
- ✓ *Catron County, New Mexico**
- ✓ *Cibola County, New Mexico**
- ✓ McKinley County, New Mexico*

