



INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE VOTER REGISTRATION

THE PROBLEM:

- Intentional suppression of the Native vote, the legacy of colonization, and present-day racism prevent many Native Americans from exercising their fundamental right to vote.
- When prevented from voting, Native people cannot elect leaders who represent Native communities and protect Native interests.
- Ongoing geographic, language, and resource barriers make it harder for Natives to complete even just the first step of voting – registration.
- As a result, over a third (34%) of voting age Native Americans are not registered to vote – this is approximately 1.2 million potential voters who aren't being heard in our democracy.

A SOLUTION: Health programs that serve Native people can help patients who want to register to vote complete the process while they are waiting for their appointments.

- Under an order from President Biden, federal agencies – including facilities operated by the Indian Health Service (IHS) – are encouraged to seek and accept designation as voter registration sites under the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA).
- Through NVRA designation, both IHS programs and health programs administered by Tribal governments under a 638-Compact could provide high quality voter registration services – similar to those provided for decades at DMVs, Medicaid offices, and other state agencies – to the Native people they serve.
- IHS and Tribally administered health programs serve approximately 2.6 million American Indians and Alaska Native people each year, many of whom are not registered to vote.
- Unregistered patrons would benefit from the convenience of voter registration alongside their routine visits to IHS and tribal health facilities.

THE IMPACT OF THIS SOLUTION:

- Agencies that have become designated voter registration sites under the NVRA, have added millions of people to the voter rolls.
- A robust body of research demonstrates the relationship between voting and improved individual and community health.
- NVRA designation is inexpensive and impactful. Data from one state's Dept. of Health and Human Services show the average cost of offering voter registration at that agency is a mere \$7,000 per site per year.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: NCAI passed a resolution urging IHS and tribal health facilities to seek NVRA designation.

- If you have an IHS program in your community, urge them to offer voter registration and accept NVRA designation.
- If you have a Tribal health program funded by IHS, reach out to NARF to get help seeking NVRA designation for the program and setting up voter registration services for your members.

**TO DISCUSS THIS OPPORTUNITY FURTHER, REACH OUT TO
THE NATIVE AMERICAN RIGHTS FUND AT VOTE@NARF.ORG.**