



# **2018 Native Vote:** An Update for Tribal Leaders



# **Competitive 2018 Races Where Our Vote Will Matter**

As we gear up for Native Vote 2018, NCAI looked at key states where the Native vote could play an important role in shaping the future makeup of Congress. With multiple key races in areas with large Native populations, the Native vote has the potential to influence election results that could have a major impact on significant policy issues.

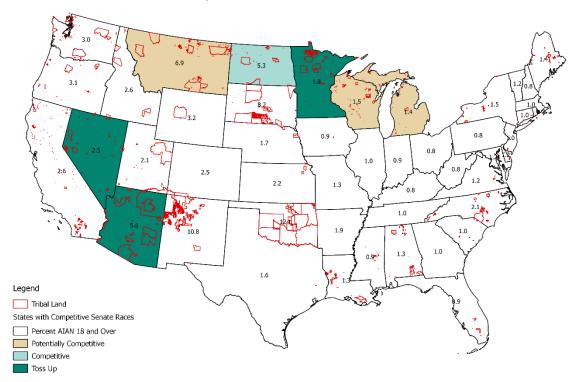
In many close races in recent years, the margin of victory has been less than half of a percent. In these places the Native vote makes all the difference. For example, one of the states with the closest margin in the 2016 Presidential Election was Michigan with a margin of 0.3%. With more than 100,000 Native people age 18 and older in Michigan, the Native people eligible to vote was 4 times more than the margin of victory in that state. While the Native population in the United States is relatively small at about 1.5% of the general population, in many states and districts, Native voters make up a sizable portion of eligible voters. The Native vote could influence the outcome of many elections, as long as we register to vote, hold candidates accountable for their positions, and turn out to vote on election day.

The mid-term elections promise to be hard fought with a number of close races determining control of the House and possibly the Senate. According to political pundits, there are several Senate, House, and gubernatorial races considered competitive, tossup, or potentially competitive. In some of these races, the Native vote is as large as 22.5% of the electorate (Arizona's 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District). Even in statewide races, the Native vote could play a key role in 2018 elections, such as in Alaska (where the Native eligible voter population is over 17%), New Mexico (more than 10%), Montana (7%), Arizona (more than 5%), North Dakota (more than 5%), and others. This NCAI update lists the House, Senate, and gubernatorial races considered competitive or potentially competitive along with the eligible Native voter population for each state or congressional district.

As citizens of our tribes, we as Native voters often turn out in higher rates for tribal elections than non-tribal elections. However, because state governors, state legislatures, and especially the U.S. Congress make many policy decisions that affect Native people, increasing Native participation in non-tribal democracy will lead to better responsiveness to tribal needs.

**Senate**: The following are seats in states with relatively large Native populations where the Native vote could make a significant difference. Those states include: Nevada, Arizona, North Dakota, Montana, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

### **Competitive Senate Races in 2018**



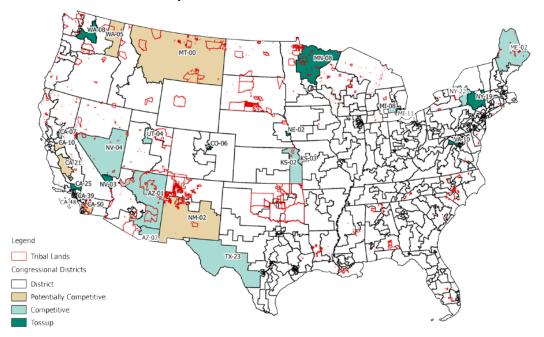
State	Seat	Pct AIAN 18 and Older*	Rating	Primary Election Dates
AZ	Flake	5.6%	Tossup	August 28, 2018
MI	Stabenow	1.4%	Potentially Competitive	August 7, 2018
MN	Smith	1.8%	Tossup	August 14, 2018
MT	Tester	6.9%	Potentially Competitive	June 5, 2018
ND	Heitkamp	5.3%	Competitive	June 12, 2018
NV	Heller	2.5%	Tossup	June 12, 2018
WI	Baldwin	1.5%	Potentially Competitive	August 14, 2018

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016 Population Estimates, \*AIAN denotes American Indian/Alaska Native; data include people who identify as AIAN "alone or in combination with other races"

The table includes the percentage of American Indians/Alaska Natives of the eligible voting population. For instance, in Arizona, 5.6% of the population 18 years and older are Native.

**House of Representatives**: On the House side, the following seats, in areas with relatively large Native populations are also considered tossup or potentially competitive in 2018. Districts with tribes and Native voters in Arizona, California, Colorado, Kansas, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and Washington have competitive or toss up races.

# **Competitive House Races in 2018**

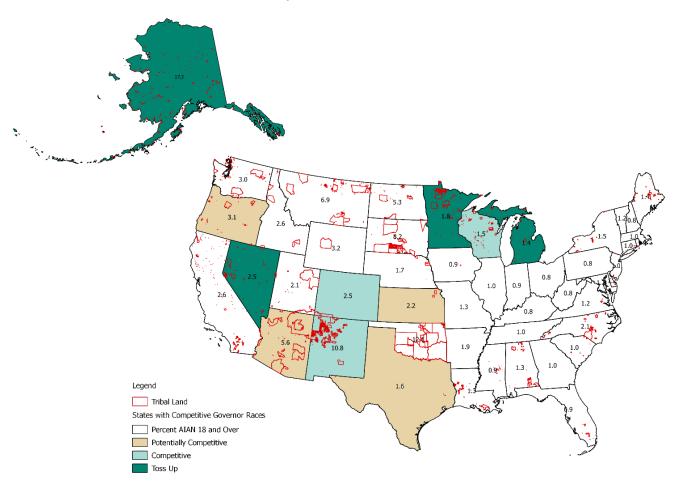


District	Seat	% AIAN 18 & over	Rating	Primary Election Dates
AZ -01	O'Halleran	22.5%	Competitive	August 28, 2018
AZ -02	Open	2.8%	Competitive	August 28, 2018
CA -07	Bera	2.3%	Competitive	June 5, 2018
CA -10	Denham	2.4%	Competitive	June 5, 2018
CA -21	Valadeo	2.1%	Potentially Competitive	June 5, 2018
CA -25	Knight	2.3%	Tossup	June 5, 2018
CA -39	Open	1.5%	Competitive	June 5, 2018
CA -48	Rohrabacher	1.1%	Tossup	June 5, 2018
CA -50	Hunter	3.2%	Potentially Competitive	June 5, 2018
CO -06	Coffman	1.6%	Tossup	June 26, 2018
KS -02	Open	3.1%	Competitive	August 7, 2018
KS -03	Yoder	1.2%	Competitive	August 7, 2018
ME -02	Poliquin	2.0%	Competitive	June 12, 2018
MI -08	Bishop	1.1%	Competitive	August 7, 2018
MI -11	Open	0.9%	Tossup	August 7, 2018
MN -08	Nolan	3.5%	Tossup	August 14, 2018
MT -00	Gianforte	7.0%	Potentially Competitive	June 5, 2018
NE -02	Bacon	1.0%	Tossup	May 15, 2018
NM -02	Open	5.7%	Potentially Competitive	June 5, 2018
NV -03	Open	1.4%	Tossup	June 12, 2018
NV -04	Open	1.6%	Competitive	June 12, 2018
NY -19	Faso	1.0%	Tossup	June 26, 2018
NY -22	Tenney	0.7%	Competitive	June 26, 2018
TX -23	Hurd	1.9%	Competitive	March 6, 2018
UT -04	Love	1.5%	Competitive	June 26, 2018
VA -10	Comstock	1.1%	Tossup	June 12, 2018
WA -05	McMorris Rodgers	3.3%	Potentially Competitive	August 7, 2018
WA -08	Open	2.2%	Tossup	August 7, 2018

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016 American Community Survey 1-year

In races for state governors, the Native vote could play a major role in deciding contests in Alaska (more than 17% of the voting age population is Native), New Mexico (more than 10%), Arizona (more than 5%), as well as Colorado, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, Oregon, Texas, and Wisconsin.

# **Competitive Gubernatorial Races in 2018**



State	Seat	% AIAN AoiC of 18	Rating	Primary Election
State	Seat	over		Dates
AK	Walker	17.3%	Tossup	August 21, 2018
AZ	Ducey	5.6%	Potentially Competitive	August 28, 2018
СО	Hickenlooper	2.5%	Competitive	June 26, 2018
KS	Brownback	2.2%	Potentially Competitive	August 7, 2018
MI	Snyder	1.4%	Tossup	August 7, 2018
MN	Dayton	1.8%	Tossup	August 14, 2018
NM	Martinez	10.8%	Competitive	June 5, 2018
NV	Sandoval	2.5%	Tossup	June 12, 2018
OR	Brown	3.1%	Potentially Competitive	May 15, 2018
TX	Abbott	1.6%	Potentially Competitive	March 6, 2018
WI	Walker	1.5%	Competitive	August 14, 2018

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016 Population Estimates, \*AIAN denotes American Indian/Alaska Native, \*AoiC denotes "alone or in combination with other races"

# **Native Candidates Running in 2018**

Among the many goals of Native Vote, one is to encourage Native people to run for elected office. According to Native journalist Mark Trahant, there are currently 15 Native candidates running for Congress or statewide offices and 46 candidates running for state legislative positions in 2018 Midterm Elections.

State	District	Name	Tribal Affiliation	Primary Election Date
AK	Lt. Gov.	Byron Mallott	Tlingit	August 21, 2018
AZ	U.S. Senate	Eve Reyes Aguirre	Calpolli	August 28, 2018
CA	Secretary of State	Erik Rydberg	Pomo	June 5, 2018
СО	Attorney General	Joseph Salazar	Apache	June 26, 2018
HI	Governor	Andria Tupola	Samoan, Native Hawaiian	August 11, 2018
ID	Governor	Paulette Jordan	Couer d'Alene	May 15, 2018
MN	Lt. Gov.	Peggy Flanagan	White Earth Ojibwe	August 14, 2018
NM	1 <sup>st</sup>	Debra Haaland	Laguna Pueblo	June 5, 2018
NM	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Gavin Clarkson	Choctaw	June 5, 2018
OK	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Jason Nichols	Cherokee	June 26, 2018
OK	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Markwayne Mullin	Cherokee	June 26, 2018
OK	4 <sup>th</sup>	Tom Cole	Chickasaw	June 26, 2018
TX	3 <sup>rd</sup>	J.D. Colbert	Chickasaw	March 6, 2018
UT	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Carol Surveyor	Navajo	June 26, 2018
WA	8 <sup>th</sup>	Dino Rossi	Tlingit	August 7, 2018

Source: Trahant Reports, Federal Election Commission, State Election Offices

"We need more Native candidates on the ballot in order to build infrastructure and start conversation on important issues." -Mark Trahant, Trahant Reports

The bottom line is: each Native vote matters. This means your issues matter to members of Congress. Reach out now to candidates and ask their positions on issues that are important to you. Let those candidates know that the Native vote is strong and you, along with your network of tribal citizens and advocates, will be watching and listening to commitments made to tribal nations on the campaign trail, and also, to commitments made to entities opposed to tribal rights. In 2018, the Native vote will have very real implications in many key areas.

### How to Advocate for Indian Country throughout the Campaign Season

Campaign promises can turn into real policy changes. This is why it is so important to get your representatives on the record supporting Indian Country before they are elected. Attending campaign events and directly asking candidates about Indian Country's issues is the easiest way to know where a candidate stands.

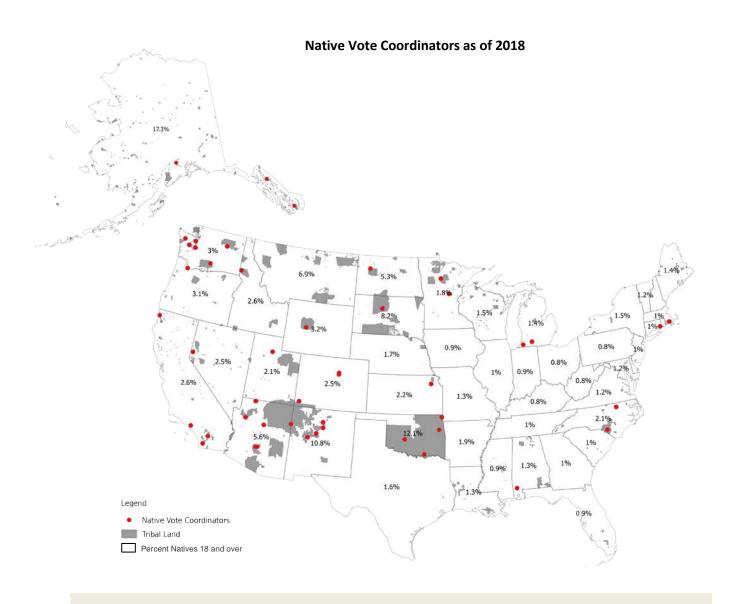
Questions to ask candidates:

- Do you support tribal sovereignty?
- Do you support full funding for programs that directly impact tribal communities?
  - Bureau of Indian Affairs
  - o Indian Health Service
- Do you support federal funding that goes directly to tribes rather than funneling through states?
- Do you support the Tribal Labor Sovereignty Act?
- Will you make sure that Indian Country is included in all major legislation?
  - o For example, if there is an infrastructure bill, will you fight to ensure that its programs reach Indian Country?
- If elected, how will you fight for my Tribal Community in the halls of Congress?

#### **Native Vote Coordinators**

Expanding the Native Vote coordinator network is foundational for revitalizing civic engagement. The NCAI Native Vote initiative currently has 72 Native Vote coordinators across 25 states.

If your tribe or region does not have a Native Vote Coordinator, designate one as soon as possible. Our coordinators serve as liaisons between NCAI and the local Native voters in tribal communities. They are responsible for encouraging active voter participation throughout their communities through activities such as: registration drives, candidate education forums, ballot initiative community discussions, and phone banks. Once you have designated a Native Vote coordinator for you tribe, please contact Whitney Sawney at <a href="mailto:wsawney@ncai.org">wsawney@ncai.org</a>.



# **Removing Barriers for Native Voters**

The most common and serious concern consistently raised by Native voters is distance to polling locations. It is not uncommon for tribal voters to be assigned to polling places that are unreasonably far away and require significant travel time, in violation of the Voting Rights Act. Compared to other voters, many Native people have less access to early voting and voter registration. If you do not currently have a voter registration, early voting, or election day polling place in your community, you can request one with your county clerk or other local election official. NCAI has developed the sample letter below for you to modify and use to begin the dialogue with your local election officials. Taking action now to ensure that your tribal citizens have equal access to register and vote can significantly increase voter turnout.

# Sample Request for Voter Registration, Early Voting, Election Day Voting Site

Note – Election procedures vary from state to state, and this letter should be modified accordingly. In particular, voter registration and early voting procedures vary. Election day voting is generally similar. This example is from Nevada.

Date: (send as early as possible before election)
Address: usually to County Clerk, also send to County Commissioners or County Election Board
Dear County Officials:
We write today to request that County provide equal access to the ballot box for persons living on the Reservation. As you are aware, our Reservation is a great distance from the County courthouse and many reservation residents do not have access to affordable transportation. We do not have access to in-person voter registration without driving nearly XXX miles round-trip, or access to in-person early voting without driving nearly XXX miles round-trip, and we do not have access to in-person voting on Election Day. Other communities of similar size receive these election services. (It is straightforward to research other polling locations on the Secretary of State's website, populations from the Census Bureau, and to measure distances in Google maps. Provide details here where possible.)  Many people in our community are eager to vote, and access to voter registration and voting locations will be a great benefit to voter participation.
Voter Registration (In-person)
We request that the county provide a satellite voter registration office for the 2018 general election staffed by the Clerk's office on our Reservation open the same hours as the County Courthouse for the following dates: (note the cut-off dates for voter registration vary by state, choose dates immediately before the cut-off)
Tuesday, October X, 2018
Wednesday, October X, 2018
Thursday, October X, 2018
Friday, October X, 2018
Because voter registration is required in order to vote, voting participation will be significantly enhanced by the opening of a satellite in-person voter registration office on our Reservation for these X days. (Suggest a location, perhaps at tribal government offices, or another location such as a school or library).

### **Early Voting Site (In-person)**

For early voting, we request that you establish and open an early vote location on our Reservation that is open for the same hours and days as *insert the site for early voting in the county seat*. Early voting makes voting more accessible to more citizens; increases voter participation rates; allows more accurate and efficient ballot counts; reduces administrative costs to the taxpayer; and creates a more informed and thoughtful electorate.

However, these benefits are diminished because the early voting site is a XXX mile round-trip for the citizens on our reservation. (Suggest a location, perhaps at tribal government offices, or another location such as a school or library).

#### **Election Day Voting Site**

Lastly, we request that you establish and open an in-person site for voting on Election Day itself open for the same hours as all other polling locations and with the same voting equipment and participation of voting officials. As you are aware, there is no polling site open on our Reservation on Election Day. (Suggest a location, perhaps at tribal government offices, or another location such as a school or library).

#### **Next Steps**

We request that you work with (provide name and contact information for a person to follow up, perhaps a tribal administrator or tribal attorney, or both). We will be contacting you soon to discuss next steps.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We greatly appreciate your service, and look forward to working with you to increase voter participation for everyone in (*name of county*.)

Sincerely,

cc: Secretary of State

[You may want to provide a short cover letter to Secretary of State that recounts the distances and difficulties with voting. Ask Secretary of State to support the request you made to the county.]

# **Native American Voting Rights Coalition**

NCAI is a founding member of the Native American Voting Rights Coalition with the Native American Rights Fund, along with a network of national and grass-roots organizations, scholars and voting rights activists. The Coalition is conducting field hearings on the state of voting rights in Indian Country. The purpose is to identify and document the barriers Native voters face in federal, state, and local (non-tribal) elections, as well as share their success stories that can be replicated by other tribes throughout different regions. The information will help promote public education and identify policy solutions and other legal remedies to expand and ensure Natives' access to voting.

We strongly encourage a representative from your tribe to participate and testify at one of the upcoming field hearings. Some of the issues to be addressed are:

- Location of voter registration sites
- Location of in-person voting site
- Voter identification requirements
- Vote-by-mail
- Early voting
- Poll worker opportunities
- Redistricting
- Treatment at the polls
- Language barriers
- Other forms of discrimination

#### **Upcoming Field Hearings:**

- Southern Plains field hearing, Tulsa, OK; February 23, 2018
- Southwestern field hearing, Albuquerque, NM; March 8-9, 2018
- Northern California field hearing, Sacramento, CA; April 6, 2018 (tentative)

For more information about the field hearings, please visit www.narf.org/voting-rights/

## **Contacting NCAI Native Vote**

For further questions regarding Native Vote, please contact Whitney Sawney at <a href="mailto:wsawney@ncai.org">wsawney@ncai.org</a> or (202) 466-7767 Ext. 591.

View more resources available on the Native Vote website at www.NativeVote.org

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