

NATIVE VOTE TOOLKIT



National
Congress of
American
Indians



Thank you to our partners in developing this Native Vote Toolkit:



Nonprofit VOTE partners up with America's nonprofits to help the people they serve participate and vote, by providing nonpartisan resources to help nonprofits integrate voter engagement into their ongoing activities and services.



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What is Native Vote?

Native Vote is a nonpartisan campaign initiated by the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI). It is designed to encourage American Indian and Alaska Native people to exercise their right to vote. With the heightened political participation of Native people, Indian Country has become an increasingly powerful voting bloc. In recent years, the Native vote has been publicly acknowledged as making a pivotal difference in national, state, and local elections.

The Native Vote campaign is working closely with regional organizations, tribal governments, and urban Indian centers to create a strong and permanent infrastructure for election training that highlights voter registration, election protection policies, and voter and candidate education.

1. **Voter Registration and Get-Out-The-Native-Vote (GOTNV):** NCAI recognizes that a strong grassroots effort is needed and encourages all tribal nations and state-based and regional inter-tribal organizations to have a Native Vote coordinator. There is a need to get the community mobilized early, starting with voter registration, as Native people are unregistered at higher rates than other communities. To mobilize and assist tribal nations with the upcoming elections, Native Vote is providing toolkits, updating the Native Vote webpage, distributing email broadcasts and promotional items, creating Public Service Announcements (PSAs), and hosting telephone conferences, webinars, and trainings.

Youth Outreach: According to the U.S. Census, American Indians and Alaska Natives have one of the youngest populations of any racial/ethnic group in the United States, with those under the age of 25 making up about 40 percent of the total American Indian and Alaska Native population.¹ Every four years, about half a million Native young people turn 18 and become eligible to vote. This provides an opportunity to engage almost one in ten Native people as new voters. Native Vote, in partnership with other youth non-profit organizations, will be working to reach out to these new and future voters. Part of this effort will include the dissemination of a youth curriculum to encourage civic engagement and get youth involved in making a difference in their communities.

2. **Election Protection:** It is critical for voters to understand their rights, especially those who do not regularly participate in the political process. In collaboration with Election Protection coordinators, Native Vote works to ensure that every eligible voter has the opportunity to cast a ballot on Election Day. NCAI works with legal advocates locally and nationally to assist with the Election Protection component of this campaign. In addition, NCAI is planning to distribute materials to help all Native people understand their voting rights.
3. **Education:** This strategy is comprised of three pieces: 1) Providing information to Native voters on candidates and ballot measures; 2) Educating candidates on the issues that Indian Country cares about and encouraging candidates to develop Native policy platforms; and 3)

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Population Estimates, July 1, 2018.



Encouraging more Native people to run for elected office. Native Vote will be preparing materials to aid in this effort and also will work with regional organizations and other non-profits to enhance voter awareness and education efforts.

4. **Data Collection: Measuring the Impact of Native Vote:** Understanding the voting patterns of Native people is key to understanding the impact of Native Vote and streamlining future efforts. Data on voter registration and voter turnout for American Indians and Alaska Natives has historically been complex and incomplete. NCAI plans to share data collection approaches and tools with tribal leaders to encourage them to understand the voting patterns of American Indians and Alaska Natives locally in their state and nationally.

Why is Native Vote important?

American Indians/Alaska Natives make up about two percent of the United States population. That is about 6 million people per 2018 U.S. Census Bureau population estimates. Existing research suggests that historically, as citizens of our tribes, we as Native voters have turned out to vote in higher rates for tribal elections than in non-tribal elections (Lambert 2007, p. 118).² However, because the U.S. President and Congress as well as state governors, state legislatures, and county and local elected officials make important policy decisions that affect Native peoples, increasing Native participation in non-tribal elections will lead to better responsiveness to the needs of tribal nations and communities.

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 help of the Native Vote. Senator Tester acknowledged before the 2012 election that his success would be built on turnout on Montana's Indian reservations and Native voters supported the Senator because of his close engagement with tribal nations. As one article noted, "Jon regularly visits every Montana Indian Reservation, sits down with tribal leaders and families, and brings their concerns straight back to Washington."³ In 2018, Senator Tester won again with 50.3% of the vote with significant support once again from Montana reservations.

In 2010, U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) became the second person ever to win a U.S. Senate seat through a write-in campaign, having lost the Republican primary to another candidate. Murkowski credits the significant power of the Alaska Native vote with ensuring her victory at the polls. She won by over 10,000 write-in votes in the general election – with over 100,000 people total writing in the name "Murkowski."

"My success in running this historic write-in campaign would not have been possible...if Alaska's Native people did not turn out to the polls, did not energize,

² V. Lambert, *Choctaw Nation: A Story of American Indian Resurgence* (University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 118.

³ Quote retrieved on 8/16/2019 on <http://tester.senate.gov>



or did not come together as they did. I deeply, deeply appreciate the trust that Alaska Native peoples have placed in me.”

– Senator Lisa Murkowski, speaking on her 2010 election at the 2011 State of Indian Nations Address

Rules for Being Nonpartisan

The Native Vote campaign is a nonpartisan initiative. As a nonpartisan and nonprofit campaign, we are allowed to conduct voter registration drives and engage in nonpartisan voter education and turnout activities. By law, however, we are forbidden from engaging in partisan political activity in support of, or in opposition to, any candidate for public office. There are two severe consequences for violating this law. First, NCAI’s tax-exempt status may be revoked. Second, the Native Vote campaign loses its reputation as being a reliable nonpartisan source for voters. The American Indian and Alaska Native population has made political progress in the last decade because our issues are nonpartisan. They transcend any single political party or campaign. Consequently, political parties are compelled to compete for our vote.

Native Vote Volunteers CAN (*while representing or participating in voter activities as a Native Vote team member*):

- ☐ Conduct nonpartisan voter registration drives.
- ☐ Host nonpartisan education sessions about participation in the political process.
- ☐ Inform people of their right to vote, provide a list of candidates, and communicate when and where to vote on Election Day.
- ☐ Distribute material educating voters about the issues at stake in the election. For example, the following language is permissible: “This election will affect taxation, Indian Health Service (IHS) funding, and trust reform.”
- ☐ Distribute sample ballots or nonpartisan voter guides.
- ☐ Reach out specifically to American Indian and Alaska Native voters.
- ☐ Invite ALL candidates to an event to discuss their views.
- ☐ Educate the candidates on tribal nations’ issues.
- ☐ Work with all political parties to get positions included in the party’s platform (with certain restrictions).
- ☐ Produce and distribute unbiased candidate questionnaires.



- ☐ Encourage voters by phone, canvass door to door, or broadcast public service announcements on radio, TV, the internet, and social media to remind people to vote on Election Day.

Native Vote Volunteers CANNOT (*while representing or participating in voter activities as a Native Vote team member*):

- ☐ Endorse a specific candidate, party, or Political Action Committee.
- ☐ Encourage or discourage support of a particular candidate.
- ☐ Contribute money to, or provide services for, a political candidate, party, or Political Action Committee.
- ☐ Work with a political candidate, party, or Political Action Committee in planning or carrying out voter registration, education, or turnout activities.
- ☐ Ask a candidate to sign a pledge on any issue (tacit endorsement).
- ☐ Wear candidate or party items while registering voters or working the polls.
- ☐ Publish or communicate anything that explicitly or implicitly favors or opposes a candidate.
- ☐ Let candidates use your facilities or resources, unless they are made equally available to all candidates at their fair market value – such as a room commonly used for public events.

Unlike Native Vote, tribal nations *can* endorse and openly support particular candidate(s). Native Vote team members *cannot*. All endorsements must come directly from the tribal nation.

This summary only provides general guidelines. It is not legal advice. Organizations should consult with their attorney on specific questions.



Voter Registration in Indian Country

In order to maximize the Native vote, it is critical that American Indians and Alaska Natives actively participate in tribal, local, state, *and* national elections. To encourage this effort, NCAI has revitalized an extensive national effort to mobilize the Native vote in collaboration with regional inter-tribal organizations, tribal governments, urban Indian centers, and non-governmental organizations. Unlike other areas throughout the nation, Indian Country can present unique challenges and difficult conditions for voter registration. NCAI has compiled the following suggestions to assist with these challenges:

Before you begin helping individuals to register to vote:

- ☐ Make sure you know the procedures, rules, and deadlines for registering voters in your state and county. Some states may require training for voter registration volunteers. You can find this information on the Secretary of State website for your respective state, or contact Native Vote with questions.
- ☐ Request data on voter registration from the county election officer. For example, you can request the number of registered voters by county and precinct to help measure your success.
- ☐ Purchase a complete list of registered voters from the county election office.
- ☐ Pick up stacks of voter registration cards at your county election office.
- ☐ Be sure to consider the language needs of your tribal community; recruit volunteers who are able to communicate in the Native languages of your community.

Register voters and distribute voter registration cards through:

- ☐ Tribal, local, or IHS health facilities: The local IHS facility, for example, is a great place to find people to register to vote. You can take time to educate the voters and recruit volunteers as they wait to be seen by the health care providers.
- ☐ Tribal headquarters: All tribal headquarters should have voter registration materials made available to the public in the facility's high-traffic areas.
- ☐ Local elementary, middle, and high schools: Registering voters at local community schools will give parents and teachers convenient access to voter registration. It also gives you direct access to the newest crop of unregistered voters – high school students who are 18 and older.



- ☐ Tribal agencies: Places like local housing, childcare, or economic development agencies are frequented by diverse populations every day.
- ☐ Canvassing: Get-Out-the-Native-Vote (GOTNV) by canvassing door-to-door in your local neighborhoods to register people to vote.

Set up a voter registration booth at:

- ☐ Powwows and other community events: Setting up booths at places where your community gathers will give you immediate access to large groups of people.
- ☐ Tribal colleges: Local colleges and universities offer an opportunity to get young people engaged in the political process at an early age.
- ☐ Post offices: We believe since local post offices tend to receive the most visits at the beginning of the month, this would be the best time for voter outreach.

Helpful hints for a successful voter registration event:

- ☐ Dress like your audience: This will avoid creating an “us” versus “them” situation; voters will feel more at ease instead of feeling like they are being watched. Keep your messages short and simple with only one or two points. Voting should not seem overly complicated; having too many messages can confuse or irritate the voter.
- ☐ Start your interaction with the question: “Can I update your voter registration?” This is more effective than asking if they would just like to register to vote.
- ☐ If a person says they are already registered to vote, be sure to ask: “Have you moved recently?” An updated registration is just as important as a new one.
- ☐ Get out from behind the voter registration table or booth: Look like you are having fun and keep the conversation positive. If people really do not want to register or are unfriendly, move on.
- ☐ Explain the voter registration card to each voter and make sure to highlight a few key points: Before the voter leaves, look over the form and ensure all required fields are completed and legible.
- ☐ Decorate your voter registration table to attract attention and make your table or booth inviting: You can find Native Vote template posters available at *NativeVote.org*.
- ☐ Stay nonpartisan: When doing voter registration, there is one basic rule: Native Vote coordinators and volunteers may not suggest a candidate to support, what party to join,



or how to vote. Coordinators and volunteers may not wear a candidate's buttons or apparel. However, they may explain the difference between joining a party and registering without party affiliation.



Sample Voter Registration Script – Adapted from NonprofitVOTE

Below is a sample script to help guide your conversation about voter registration. Be sure to tailor it to your tribal citizens.

Introduction: Hi, how are you? My name is (*your name*). It is important for us at (*insert group name*) to make sure everyone we serve is an active and engaged member of the community. That is why we are helping people register to vote or update their voter registration. Can I help you update your voter registration today?

If “yes” That’s great! Here is the form, and please let me know if you have any questions. (*Register the person to vote and move to Closing*)

If “already registered” That’s great! Have you moved recently?

“No, I haven’t moved” (*Move to Pledge to Vote script below*)

“Yes, I moved” I can help you update your registration so you can vote. This will only take a few minutes. (*Register the person to vote and move to Closing*)

If “no, not interested” (*See Common Responses below*)
(or too busy, not eligible, etc.)

Closing: Thank you for (“*registering to vote*” or “*updating your voter registration information*”) with me. I will submit this right away to our local elections division and you should be all set for the upcoming election!

Make sure to vote on (*date*) for the (*primary or general*) election!

Please ask the voter for his or her phone number, if not provided, in order to offer additional resources and information.

Before the voter leaves, please look over the form and ensure all required fields are completed and legible.



Common Responses:

1. *"I don't have time."*

I understand you are really busy. Filling out this form only takes a couple minutes and I can make sure it gets turned in for you. You can save time by registering with me today.

2. *"I'm not interested" or "I don't vote."*

I understand. There are a lot of challenges out there. We want to register everyone in our community because it is important that the voices of our tribal community are heard. Just to let you know, I will be here on **(insert dates you are tabling)** if you change your mind about registering to vote. Thanks so much for stopping by!

3. *"I don't know any of the candidates."*

I understand! We are nonpartisan and cannot recommend candidates, but you may want to get this information from a friend or family member. *(Or provide the person a sample ballot or nonpartisan voter guide if available)*. Consider referring them to a nonpartisan website with information about all the candidates.

4. *"Who should I vote for?"*

We are a nonpartisan organization and we do not endorse candidates. We suggest talking to a friend or family member that might be able to help. *(Or provide the person a sample ballot or nonpartisan voter guide if available)*.

5. *"I don't want to list my phone number."*

It is not a required field, but it is really helpful to list your phone number in case the local board of elections has a problem with your registration and needs to contact you.



Engaging with Candidates

Native Vote Coordinators may wish to engage with candidates to inform them about important issues within tribal communities and to build relationships with future elected officials. This is permissible as long as any candidate engagement is done on a *nonpartisan basis*.

Hosting a Candidate Forum – Adapted from Nonprofit VOTE

Hosting a candidate forum can raise awareness about the importance of the Native Vote and highlight important issues in Indian Country during an election. Candidate forums involve candidates for a specific race, such as for tribal council or state senate races. Forums are time intensive, require advance planning, and are generally done in collaboration with tribal community partners. All (viable) candidates must be invited. You need two or more candidates to have a “forum.” If it is a two-candidate race and only one candidate agrees to attend, you should not go forward with the forum. If there is a last-minute cancellation, you may cancel or go forward with the candidate event as planned, but you must make sure to announce that this in no way signifies the endorsement of the attending candidate by the Native Vote initiative.

Everyone attending gets equal time to answer a range of questions of concern to the sponsoring organization or community. Organizers typically use an experienced neutral moderator such as a tribal community leader, tribal elder, educator, or someone from the media.



Candidate Forum Checklist

Before the event:

- ☐ Approach tribal community partners about collaborating to provide assistance with the venue, audio/visual, etc.
- ☐ Select potential dates and locations for the forum.
- ☐ Decide on a forum format.
- ☐ Contact candidates. Confirm dates of the forum and times for their participation.
- ☐ Make preliminary media contacts to promote and cover the event.
- ☐ Select an experienced neutral moderator.
- ☐ Develop a plan for publicity and audience turnout.
- ☐ Recruit and confirm volunteers.
- ☐ Create promotional materials: posters, social media, press release (contact nativevote@ncai.org for support).
- ☐ Obtain final confirmation attendance from candidates.
- ☐ Select a timekeeper.
- ☐ Arrange audio/visual and other advance setup.

On day of the event:

- ☐ Complete set-up at forum.
- ☐ Have volunteers greet people.
- ☐ Set up the head table, hall, and audio/visual.
- ☐ Open the forum with a welcome and thanks to those that helped organize.
- ☐ Review ground rules for forum for candidates and attendees.
- ☐ Budget time for informal questions and answers (Q&A) or mingling after the forum.



After the event:

- ☐ Send thank-you notes to the candidates, moderator, volunteers, and others.



Sample Questions for Candidates

Campaign promises can turn into real policy changes. This is why it is 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 they stand and what policies they will advance once in office. *(A note from our partners at Nonprofit VOTE: Questions should include a broad range of issues with the purpose of providing nonpartisan education about the candidates' positions. Questions should NOT be asked with the intention of swaying voters for or against specific candidates).*

Sample questions:

1. Does the candidate know and understand the U.S. Constitution and how it pertains to tribal nations?

The Constitution is the legal foundation of the United States and recognizes tribal nations as sovereign governments; it is critical that your representative fully understands and respects its importance and what it contains.

2. Does the candidate understand the constitutional relationship between the U.S. federal government and federally-recognized tribal nations?

American Indian and Alaska Native tribal nations have a unique government-to-government relationship with the U.S. government that has existed since the formation of the United States.

3. Does the candidate understand tribal sovereignty?

An understanding of and respect for tribal sovereignty is vital for adequate representation. Tribal sovereignty allows tribal nations to regulate tribal lands, taxes, zoning, resources, and the conduct of tribal citizens.

4. Does the candidate support tribal sovereignty and self-determination?

Self-governance is essential if tribal nations are to continue to protect their unique cultures and identities. In order to move forward, tribal nations need representatives that will honor and support tribal sovereignty in the national arena across all policy areas.

5. What is the candidate's motivation for running?

Is the candidate running because they want to bring good to the community? Will this individual be the voice that will represent the *entire* community? Be cautious when assessing whether the candidate is running for you or for him/herself.



6. Has the candidate visited your reservation or tribal community?

It is almost impossible to truly realize the unique challenges and obstacles that tribal communities face without witnessing them in person.

7. Does the candidate have personal integrity to keep specific campaign promises related to Indian Country?

Although it may be unpopular, will the candidate support and defend tribal interests?

8. What about the candidate or their past behavior makes you confident they will keep their promises?

Candidates tend to make promises, so it is important to look at their history. Do they actually follow through on their promises with real policies, or do they just say what the voters want to hear?

9. When has the candidate been true to their word even to their own detriment?

Actions speak louder than words. If the candidate has stood up for tribal nations in the past, then there is a good chance that he/she will do so again.

10. If the candidate has already served in office, what was their voting record?

Indian Country needs representatives who have proven they support and advocate for tribal nations and their citizens!



Native Vote Campaign Preparation

Campaign Preparation

- ☐ Obtain list of registered voters: Go to the county election office and purchase a list of all the registered voters in your community. You can use this list to call and visit registered voters to encourage them to vote.
- ☐ Register voters: As you are registering people, be sure to keep a list of those you have registered. Add these names to the list you received from the county election office.
- ☐ Advocate for time off to vote: Meet with tribal nations several months before Election Day to encourage them to close tribal offices on Election Day or else to allow ample paid time off for tribal employees to cast their ballots.

Organizing Volunteers

- ☐ Recruit official Election Judges: Most states require these volunteers to be trained several months in advance of Election Day. Encourage tribal citizens to volunteer to help facilitate the electoral process at designated voting locations.
- ☐ Recruit drivers: Ask volunteers to drive around the community to provide tribal citizens transportation to the polling stations. Aside from using personal vehicles, be sure to work with your tribal nation to secure tribal vans and buses.
- ☐ Recruit Poll Watchers and Voter Counters for Election Protection: Try to place a Native Vote volunteer in every precinct that includes a tribal community. These volunteers should be able to answer voter questions about polling locations, election rules, and general election information. If problems arise, they should document the problem and call the Election Protection team if the voter does not have a fair opportunity to vote.
- ☐ Enlist door knockers to engage in direct outreach: Encourage volunteers to go door-to-door throughout the tribal community, make phone calls, and encourage people to vote on Election Day. The Poll Watchers/Voter Counters should also give them a list of people who have not voted by late afternoon on Election Day.

Advertising

- ☐ Post flyers: Make flyers with general Election Day information including a list of candidates and ballot questions and a directory of polling locations. Post these flyers throughout the community at tribal agencies, tribal council offices, IHS facilities, elder centers, post offices, and other community locations where tribal citizens often visit. Customize these flyers to fit your community and include your tribal language,



important tribal issues, and other culturally appropriate information. This is your vote and your community. Native Vote poster templates are available at *NativeVote.org*.

- **Radio:** Get the local radio station to announce the election date, candidates, and polling locations. Make sure the announcements are given in your tribal language as well.
 - Sample radio PSA script (*Note: this is written in the style of a traditional radio PSA for easy on-air reading*).
 - IN 1947 MIGUEL TRUE-HE-OH SUED THE STATES OF NEW MEXICO AND ARIZONA TO SECURE THE RIGHT OF NATIVE AMERICANS TO VOTE. OVER 70 YEARS LATER, THE NATIVE VOTE HAS THE POWER TO SWING ELECTIONS AND INFLUENCE THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE NATION. MAKE SURE YOUR VOICE IS HEARD THIS ELECTION CYCLE AND VISIT W-W-W DOT NATIVE VOTE DOT O-R-G FOR IMPORTANT DATES, POLLING LOCATIONS, AND REGISTRATION INFORMATION IN YOUR STATE. GET OUT THE NATIVE VOTE!
- **Powwows:** Powwow emcees frequently make community announcements. Urge them to talk about the importance of Native Vote.
- **Mail flyers:** Because most tribal communities are rural, work with your tribal nation to distribute general Election Day information via mail. Some tribes have been successful with mailing flyers in paycheck envelopes.
- **Schools:** “Bring your parents to the polls.” Not only are there a number of 18-year-olds in high school, but youth have proven to be among the best voting advocates in Indian Country. Urge school officials to encourage their students to bring their parents to the polls on Election Day.



Using Social Media

Guidance for Native Vote Coordinators – Adapted from Nonprofit VOTE

When using social media under the Native Vote name, you may encourage people to register to vote on a nonpartisan basis, but you may not use social media to indicate support for, or opposition to, candidates for public office. Do not use Native Vote accounts to tag, re-tweet, or share posts with political campaigns or partisan organizations that have endorsed candidates.

Sample social media posts:

1. Every #NativeVote counts – let your voice be heard in the upcoming Primary Election on **[Insert Date]**! Find your polling location here: <https://www.rockthevote.org/voting-information/find-your-polling-place/>
2. The deadline is almost here – don't forget to register to vote by **[Insert Date]**! Be sure to register to vote here: <http://bit.ly/NativeVote20>
3. Voting Matters. Your VOICE matters. Register to vote here: <http://bit.ly/NativeVote20>
4. Your Vote, your voice – register to vote today: <http://bit.ly/NativeVote20>
5. #Indian Country CAN make a difference – cast your vote on Election Day and let your voice be heard! Register to vote here: <http://bit.ly/NativeVote20>
6. Get involved – and make it count! Every vote can help shape the future. Register to vote today: <http://bit.ly/NativeVote20>
7. Stop by the #NativeVote booth at **[Name of Event]** on **[Insert Date]** at **[Insert Location]** and learn how you can make it count!
8. Come by our #NativeVote table at the **[Name of Event]** to get registered to vote and learn how you can make a difference!
9. Save the date! Join us at our upcoming Candidate Forum on **[Insert Date]** at **[Insert Location]**. Contact **[Insert contact email]** for more information.
10. Interested in becoming a #NativeVote coordinator and making a difference in your community? Click here to find out how: <https://bit.ly/2cZD9Tv>
11. Get involved – learn how you can volunteer to transport people to the polls on Election Day. Contact **[insert contact information]** to sign up or to learn more about how you can help.



12. Did You Know? About 34 percent of Native people are not registered to vote – your voice can make a difference. Help us increase that percentage! Register to vote today: <http://bit.ly/NativeVote20>
13. Did You Know? #NativeYouth make up about 40 percent of the American Indian and Alaska Native population and the number is growing. Learn how Native youth can help shape the future by registering to vote: <http://www.nativevote.org/>
14. Every year, every election, every vote counts. Do you know the power of the #NativeVote? See why your vote matters here: <https://youtu.be/31rJaW8B1D0>
15. Native pride, Native power, #NativeVote. See how your voice can help shape the future: https://youtu.be/_8zZkHDL9sl
16. Your vote counts – make a difference at the ballot box and at the heart of your community. See why your #NativeVote matters: <https://youtu.be/x51q7tITNLE>



Preparing for Election Day

- ☐ Call voters: Hopefully you have been keeping a list of voters you have registered throughout the summer. If not, use your county election list and the tribal telephone book or member lists, if publicly available, as a resource for voter outreach. Remind everyone to vote on Election Day by calling them the day before and the day of elections.
- ☐ Visit voters: Go door-to-door in tribal housing areas with general election information. Offer to drive them to the polls if they need a ride.
- ☐ Drive people to the polls: Ask your tribal nation to offer transportation to the polling stations. Use casino buses, senior citizen buses, Head Start buses, or tribal program vans.
- ☐ Involve your family: Ask each voter to bring their entire family and friends to the polls to vote on Election Day.
- ☐ Know the stakes: All volunteers should be familiar with the candidates and major issues so they can educate and encourage tribal citizens to vote on Election Day. (*Note: Remember to remain nonpartisan. Do not endorse any specific candidate or party.*)



Election Protection

Knowing your rights as a voter is critically important, especially for those who do not continually participate in the political process. Native Vote can play an important role in getting this information to your community.

Each community should accommodate voters who have special voting barriers, such as second-language speakers, victims of abuse, ex-felons, homeless persons, and those with disabilities. In recent years, much work has been done to address the voting needs of these constituencies. For example, when victims of domestic violence register to vote, their information is strictly confidential. There are also resources available to help homeless voters establish residency. Public education, combined with community organization, can make a tremendous difference in voter protection throughout Indian Country.

Voting Rights Hotline: 1-866-OUR-VOTE

Native Vote is part of the Election Protection Coalition that was established to protect the rights of citizens across the country. The Coalition has established a hotline to respond to the questions and concerns of voters. This hotline is used to identify problems before they arise, answer voter questions, and serve as a “crisis line” in the event of Election Day problems.

Training of Citizen Advocates and Legal Experts

Widespread training of citizen advocates will help keep our elections fair and clean. With training, ordinary citizens become the “eyes and ears” of democracy. They watch for problems at the polls, assist voters, and report irregularities if they arise. Election law is not complicated, but it is essential that advocates know the rules and hold election officials accountable. A simple training program can give people the knowledge they need to ensure a fair environment at the polls. Training is essential for people who are interested in poll monitoring or poll watching on Election Day. The rules for these positions vary by locality and must be understood by volunteers.

In addition to training citizen advocates, it is also important to create or enlist a well-trained legal team of lawyers, law students, and paraprofessionals who have particular knowledge of Indian Country and election laws. Native Vote is working with the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law (LCCR) to provide assistance in election protection for Indian Country.

Data Collection

If irregularities occur, it is important to document them well. This includes names and full contact information of those whose rights may have been violated and those that may have witnessed the event, as well as a detailed description of the potential violation. This information should be forwarded to the respective governmental body that is responsible for guaranteeing the election. You should also report the incident to other legal entities, such as




the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and the Civil Rights division of the U.S. Department of Justice.

This summary only provides general guidelines. It is not legal advice. Organizations should consult with an attorney for specific questions.



Voter Engagement Planning Template

This template was developed with our partner  NonprofitVOTE

Priorities: Use this section as a place to help focus your priorities and goals for the year. Below are sample goals to help you get started.

Sample long-term goals:

- a) Increase voter registration and participation among our tribal citizens.
- b) Build a lasting culture of voter engagement within our tribal community.

Sample short-term goals:

- a) Hold a training for volunteers on voter registration.
- b) Collect 100 voter registrations.
- c) Participate in Native Vote Action Week starting September 23, 2019.

1. Your long-term goals:

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2. Your goals for the next eight months/upcoming election:

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Planning Questions: Below are some brainstorming questions that will help you complete your timeline in section C.

- 1. How will you staff your voter registration efforts? Who is your lead? Who are your tribal community partners?***

- 2. What elections (federal, state, local, special, etc.) and ballot measures are on the calendar? What are the key dates for each, e.g. voter registration deadline, early voting period, Primary Election Day, and General Election Day? (Note: You can find important dates under “Native Vote Calendar” on NativeVote.org).***

- 3. Who is your contact at your local or tribal election office? Note contact information below. When are you meeting with them?***



4. What voter engagement activities do you plan to pursue?

Sample activities include holding a nonpartisan candidate forum, creating a candidate questionnaire, organizing volunteers to do a voter registration drive, conducting voter education, mailing/calling/texting community members about an upcoming election, offering translation services at the polls, advocating for a ballot measure, etc. There are many possibilities. These are just a few.

5. Are there tribal community partners that can help you conduct your voter engagement activities (such as providing a phone bank, a venue for a forum, etc.)? What materials will you need? (Get in touch with Native Vote at nativevote@ncai.org).

6. What are your concrete goals for the next six months/upcoming election?

Sample goals include: the number of activities you would like to run; the number of voter registration events you would like to hold; the number of volunteers you would like to recruit; the number of voter registrations or pledge to vote cards you would like to collect; the number of voters you would like to call before Election Day, etc.



- 7. How do you plan on registering voters? (e.g. at community events, in highly, busy areas in the community, at an IHS facility or tribal college/university, etc.).**

- 8. What are your plans for Native Vote Action Week starting September 23, 2019? Have you registered on nativevote.org?**

- 9. What is your plan for collecting contact information from the people you engage? What database are you using to record data? Who is responsible for sending data to Native Vote at NCAI? Do you need access to your state's voter file via the Voter Activation Network (VAN) or some other tool? (Contact nativevote@ncai.org for questions about how to access the VAN).**



Planning Template

Consider your answers from part B and fill out the timeline below with your activities. List known specific dates, and/or time ranges. Examples are given below.

August

September

October

November



December

January

February

March



Contacting NCAI Native Vote

For further questions regarding Native Vote, email nativevote@ncai.org or (202) 466-7767

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

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