Vote it’s your Right

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Your vote is your voice. For many years the voice of American Indians has been suppressed or silenced when it came to voting. The way we can ensure that our voice is heard loud and clear is to register to vote, and to exercise your right to vote in the upcoming primary and general elections and every election thereafter.

While voting is an essential right of all Americans over the age of 18, for American Indians the right to vote was only recently achieved through Congressional action, individual persistence, and years of litigation.

Historically, American Indians were not considered American citizens. They were not granted citizenship until 1924, after Congress enacted to grant, “All non-citizen Indians born within the territorial limits of the United States be, and they are hereby, declared to be citizens of the United States.”

It took persistence from Native people to take a stand and fight for the right to vote. In 1948, Frank Harrison and Harry Austin from the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation took a stand and fought for their voting rights all the way to the Arizona State Supreme Court.

In a great victory the Supreme Court unanimously overruled previous opinions and recognized Indians right to vote. However, barriers were put in place after this victory which set back the voting privilege of American Indians. Barriers such as: literacy requirements, language requirements, access to the polls for those living on reservations and because American Indians were considered guardians of the federal government.

American Indians could fight in wars but could not register to have their voice heard in the voting process.

It was not until the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which ensured everyone the right to vote.

Today, American Indians make up 1.4 percent of the population nationally, and make up approximately 5% of the population in Arizona. So if every eligible American Indian voter turned out the vote during any State or National election, the voice of American Indians would be heard loud and clear.

Historically your ancestors could not vote, but today you can. If you have a valid Arizona driver’s license or state identification card, you can register to vote on-line at [www.servicearizona.com](http://www.servicearizona.com). Or be sure to stop by your local post office, or county recorder’s office to fill out a registration form. (Add local tribal facility where registration forms are available.) Remember, your vote Is our future.