

When it's not an election year, how will you stay engaged in the electoral process?

Voting is an integral part of our country's democracy and our personal civic duty. In theory voting is a right; however, as we have seen throughout history and still continue to experience today --voting is a privilege. Native Americans, the first citizens of the United States, were not granted citizenship until the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act in 1924. However, the right to vote was governed by state law. In Arizona, Native Americans were not granted the right to vote until two decades later in 1948.

Although we have made significant strides to protect and preserve the Native vote, various challenges and barriers continue to persist today that make it harder for Native Americans living on reservations to practice their right to vote. Challenges and barriers such as:

1. Having non-traditional addresses
2. Natives who are experiencing homelessness
3. Distance to the nearest polling place and lack thereof
4. Language barriers for non-English speakers and readers
5. Natives who have been incarcerated lose their right to vote

With these issues at hand, I stay civically engaged on and off election years whether it is at a federal, state, local, and tribal level. In 2018, I became a Maricopa County Registrar and Navajo Nation registrar to get Native people registered to vote who live in the Phoenix metropolitan area.

When it is not an election year, I will continue to encourage and register people to vote by ensuring they update their voter registration form if they have had any address or name change. In addition, I will monitor local, state, and federal legislation in regards to voter suppression laws and utilize the Request to Speak (RTS) system to express my concerns. Lastly, I will continue to utilize my privilege as a U.S. citizen to advocate for justice and equity.

When it is an election year, what will you do to encourage your family, friends, and community to participate in local, state, and national elections?

When it is an election year, I will continue to encourage my family, friends, and community to participate in local, state, tribal, and national elections by volunteering at voter registration drives, providing education on rights restoration, advocating for voter integrity, and assisting people on how to correctly fill out a voter registration form. I will also continue to educate and have meaningful dialogues with my family, friends, and community on the importance of voting and civic engagement.

It is important to vote for Native Americans particularly because of Tribes' unique government to government relationships with state, local and federal governments. The people we elect into office, especially on a federal level, make systemic level decisions on our healthcare, education, land preservation, and tribal infrastructure, so it is important we put leaders into office that understand our issues and will advocate for us. For instance, this past election, the United States had some of its first Native American women elected into Congress. Recently, Deb Haaland (Laguna Pueblo), the first Native

American woman to be appointed as the Secretary of the Department of Interior. Thus, the Native vote is powerful.

Natives have the ability to swing an election as we have seen in key states such as Arizona, Nevada, Wisconsin, and Minnesota during the 2020 Presidential election. I strongly believe that Native Americans have a strong voice when we stand in solidarity with one another. Civic engagement and advocacy are a part of my everyday life and I have made it my career to help ensure Native Americans residing in Arizona have the right to live and die with dignity.