



Lakota People's
LAW PROJECT



Four
Directions



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Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and Nonprofit Partners Team Up to Get Out the Vote

Tribe Makes New IDs Available and Taps Orgs to Assist with Organization and Outreach

The US Supreme Court's decision to uphold North Dakota's new voter ID law requiring state residents to furnish a street address to cast a ballot means tens of thousands of Native voters across the state run the risk of disenfranchisement this November. Because many tribal residents use P.O. boxes and currently lack identification with a street address, several tribes have taken countermeasures to ensure their members have access to the polls on Election Day.

The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe has formed a coalition made up of the tribe and nonprofit organizations Four Directions and the Lakota People's Law Project to provide voting tools and maximize outreach to Standing Rock citizens.

"As North Dakota is not a populous state, it's especially true here that every vote matters," said Phyllis Young, who serves as the coalition's lead field organizer. "At Standing Rock, we are modeling how we can work together to ensure our Native vote is as large as possible this November 6th."

The coalition has issued a [video and online resource page](#) so that tribal members at Standing Rock and throughout the state have the details they need to get prepared and vote in the coming election. The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians

and the Three Affiliated Tribes of Fort Berthold are all making new, free Tribal ID Cards with residential street addresses available to their membership through election day.

“It’s an absolutely critical election,” said Standing Rock Chairman Mike Faith. “We won’t sit quietly and let our people be denied their right to vote. That’s why we are working together with our allies to do everything we can to ensure as many people get to the polls with everything they need.”

If any North Dakota tribal member doubts whether he or she can vote, Young said the best thing to do is make a phone call. “Please call your tribal office for assistance getting an ID with a street address or other necessary documentation,” she said. “At Standing Rock, we have set up a special hotline. You can call 701-854-VOTE (8683) or go to the tribal headquarters for assistance.”

In addition to the online and telephone resources, the tribe’s external affairs department is overseeing a massive on-the-ground effort leading up to and on election day. The tribe and its partners say they will canvass every eligible voter on the North Dakota side of Standing Rock.

Approximately 4,000 citizens live in the three North Dakota tribal communities of Fort Yates, Cannonball and Porcupine alone. “Canvassing will entail not only providing technical assistance to tribal members in getting new IDs, but also transportation to and from the polls both prior to and during election day,” Young said.

There is no early voting in Sioux County, but it is possible to vote by absentee ballot. The coalition encourages tribal members who can to vote prior to November 6.

Fast Facts:

North Dakota is the only state in the union to not have voter registration and has had a voter ID law since 2004. The recent Supreme Court decision in *Brakebill et al. v. Jaeger* upheld an Appellate court ruling requiring North Dakota voters to have proof of a residential address to cast a ballot.

In part because Native American tribal members living on North Dakota’s five reservations (the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Spirit Lake Nation, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians, Three Affiliated Tribes, and two counties in the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate) do not necessarily use a residential address on identifying documentation — instead they tend to use a mailing address — the law could disenfranchise up to 72,000 eligible voters in the state.

The mean travel distance for voting age Native Americans living on Standing Rock to a site where they could obtain a North Dakota driver’s license or non-driver state identification is 61 miles.

The percent of Standing Rock residents living below the poverty line is nearly four times the rate for North Dakota as a whole, according to data tracked by the Center for Social Research at North Dakota State University.

In 2016, the Harvard Law Review found that Native Americans "routinely face hurdles in exercising the right to vote and securing representation."