The National Congress of American Indians
Resolution #MKE-17-051

TITLE: Encouraging Participation in Field Hearings on Voting Rights in Indian Country Being Held by the Native American Voting Rights Coalition

WHEREAS, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

WHEREAS, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

WHEREAS, since its first meeting in 1944, NCAI has advocated for the voting rights of Native Americans; and

WHEREAS, the National Congress of American Indians is one of the founding members of the Native American Voting Rights Coalition (NAVRC), a non-partisan coalition of national, regional, and local grassroots organizations, scholars, lawyers and activists advocating for the equal access of Native Americans to the political process; and

WHEREAS, NAVRC is holding field hearings throughout Indian Country to document barriers to registration and voting in non-tribal elections and will be using information from those hearings to promote public education, identify policy solutions, and consideration of other legal remedies to expand Native access to voting; and

WHEREAS, issues being examined at the field hearings include whether Native voters have equal access to location of voter registration and in-person voting sites, early voting, poll worker opportunities, and treatment at the polls, and whether voter identification requirements, redistricting, language, or other forms of discrimination prevent them from being able to participate effectively in the political process; and

WHEREAS, past NCAI resolutions, including ATL-14-054 and MSP-15-030, recognize that Native voters continue to face barriers to voting to a greater extent than other populations in the U.S.; and
WHEREAS, the first field hearing covering the Midwestern Region including tribes in Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming, was completed in Bismarck, North Dakota on September 5, 2017; and

WHEREAS, the second field hearing covering the Great Lakes Region including tribes in Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, was completed earlier this week at NCAI’s 74th Annual Convention; and

WHEREAS, the NAVRC plans to conduct at least eight more regional field hearings throughout the country, with the next one scheduled for the Desert Southwest Region in Phoenix, Arizona on January 11, 2018; and

WHEREAS, active participation and engagement in the field hearings is essential to develop a complete record of barriers that American Indian voters continue to face in non-tribal elections.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), as a founding member of the Native American Voting Rights Coalition (NAVRC), does hereby fully support the field hearings that the NAVRC is doing throughout the United States on the state of voting rights in Indian Country; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NCAI encourages tribal governments, tribal organizations, leaders, organizers, and voters to participate in and testify at the regional field hearings on voting rights that NAVRC will be completing in 2018; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI calls upon federal, state, and local policymakers to address the many barriers to voting that persist for Native voters; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2017 Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Wisconsin Center in Milwaukee, WI, Oct 15, 2017 - Oct 20, 2017, with a quorum present.

Jefferson Keel, President

ATTEST:

Juana Majel Dixon, Recording Secretary