



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #ATL-14-054

TITLE: Supporting Amendments to the Voting Rights Act to Ensure Access to the Vote in Indian Country

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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, 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, Native people are U.S. citizens with the right to vote in all federal and state elections; and

WHEREAS, turnout among American Indian and Alaska Native voters in the 2012 election was a full 17 percentage points lower than white voters; and

WHEREAS, due to the rural location of many Indian tribes, the high poverty rate on many Indian reservations, and barriers to transportation, American Indian and Alaska Native voters face significant disadvantages registering to vote and casting their ballot compared to their non-Native counterparts; and

WHEREAS, the Voting Rights Act was enacted to remove barriers to political participation and prohibit the denial of the right to vote on account of race or color and is considered one of the most successful civil rights laws ever enacted by Congress; and

WHEREAS, state and local governments are generally charged with administering elections and Indian voters often encounter long distances to travel, language barriers, and animosities at polling locations in reservation border towns that inhibit Native voting; and

WHEREAS, empowering tribal governments to play a role in the administration of elections and fostering greater partnership between states and tribes would facilitate access to elections for Native voters; and

WHEREAS, legislation has been introduced in both the House and Senate to amend and reauthorize the Voting Rights Act; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Justice (DOJ) has initiated a formal tribal consultation to develop additional legislative proposals to address the challenges American Indians and Alaska Natives face when exercising their right to vote.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the NCAI, in light of the history of discrimination that American Indians and Alaska Natives have experienced when voting, and the proven effectiveness of the Voting Rights Act, encourages Congress to:

- Hold hearings to examine the unique challenges facing American Indian and Alaska Native voters;
- Carefully consider any legislative proposals developed by the Department of Justice; and
- Move swiftly to pass legislation modernizing the Voting Rights Act that includes provisions specific to American Indian and Alaska Native voters; and

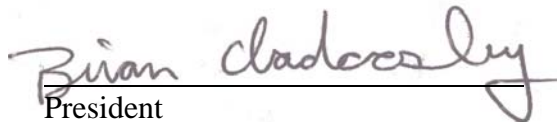
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NCAI calls upon DOJ to:

- Move swiftly to submit a legislative proposal to Congress that includes provisions that would include Indian tribes in election administration, particularly with regard to the location of voter registration sites and polling places;
- Conduct annual consultations with tribal governments to gather information about barriers to participation by Native voters; and
- Increase enforcement of the Voting Rights Act in American Indian and Alaska Native areas; and

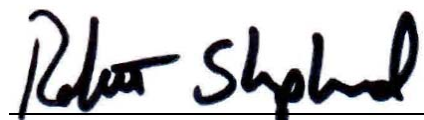
BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2014 Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Hyatt Regency Atlanta, October 26-31, 2014 in Atlanta, Georgia, with a quorum present.


President

ATTEST:


Recording Secretary