



# NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

## The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #MSP-15-030

### TITLE: Tribal Equal Access to Voting

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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**, voter turnout for American Indian and Alaska Native voters lags behind other communities in spite of gains achieved by the Voting Rights Act and developments in voting technology; and

**WHEREAS**, due to the size and 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**, 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; and

**WHEREAS**, state and local governments frequently turn American Indian and Alaska Native voters away from polling places when presented with tribal identification; and

**WHEREAS**, tribal governments are currently unable to designate polling places on tribal land; and

**WHEREAS**, NCAI greatly appreciates the efforts of the Department of Justice in drafting proposed legislation, entitled the “Tribal Equal Access to Voting Act of 2015,” to resolve many of these disparities by allowing tribes to locate at least one polling place on tribal land, mandating that states make equally available all technologies and materials employed by the state in administering elections, mandating states to provide equal compensation to poll workers at tribally-designated polling places compared to those employed at polling places elsewhere in the state, and mandating states use the same voting procedures for tribally-designated polling places as are employed at other state polling places, potentially including same-day voter registration, election-day voting, and early voting.

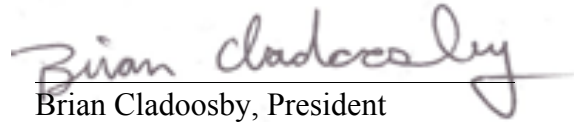
**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the NCAI encourages Congress to pass legislation that protects the rights and supports the ability of voters on reservations and in Alaska Native Village that:

- 1) empowers tribes to locate polling places on tribal land with equal technologies and materials and equal compensation to election officials and poll workers;
- 2) mandates that states use the same voting procedures for tribally-designated polling places as are employed at other state polling places including same-day voter registration, vote centers, and early voting;
- 3) empowers tribes to locate voter registration agencies tribal government service offices or federal service offices located on reservations;
- 4) addresses language barriers by removing provisions in Section 203(c) of the Voting Rights Act that limits access for “historically unwritten” languages, as all languages were historically unwritten;
- 5) requires if a State or political subdivision requires voter to present identification for the purposes of voting, a tribal identification card shall be treated as a valid;
- 6) empowers tribes to request federal elections monitors to address voter intimidation and misinformation, and requires consultation annually with tribal governments regarding issues related to voting for members of an Indian tribe; and

**BE IT FURTHER 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 2015 Midyear Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the St. Paul River Centre, St. Paul, MN, June 28 to July 1, 2015, with a quorum present.

  
Brian Cladoosby, President

**ATTEST:**

  
Aaron Payment, Recording Secretary