



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

POLICY RESEARCH CENTER

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Research Policy Update

Native Vote Report: 2020 Election Results

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Native Vote initiative is a nonpartisan effort to promote American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) voter engagement throughout Indian Country. The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the outcomes of competitive elections tracked during the 2020 election cycle where turnout of the Native Vote potentially made a difference in election outcomes. The NCAI Policy Research Center tracked over 146 competitive and potentially competitive races across the country, including Presidential, Gubernatorial, Senate and Congressional House races.



For the 2020 election cycle, a number of close races had the potential to be impacted by the number of voting age AI/ANs, especially if they constituted a significant percentage of the total population in the state or voting district and they actually voted in the election. The AI/AN voting age population potentially impacted the outcomes of competitive national, Congressional district, and state legislative races where the margin of victory was smaller than the AI/AN voting age population percentage.

The NCAI Policy Research Center tracked competitive and potentially competitive elections in the months prior to Election Day. Data on these elections changed over time, as did rankings on their competitive nature. Changes were monitored with the *Cook Political Report*, which is a non-partisan newsletter that regularly analyzes elections at the national and state level. This report also used the margin of victory from the November Election Day as collected by *270towin*, which is a non-partisan website that tracks election results as well as projections on future election outcomes. Finally, this report uses data from the U.S. Census Bureau on the number and percentage of AI/AN voters in election districts. For national and statewide elections [Electoral College (Presidential), Senate, and Gubernatorial races], the data on AI/AN voting age population is drawn from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2019 population estimates. For all other elections, AI/AN voting age population data for U.S. Congressional districts and state upper and lower legislative house levels is drawn from the Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP) Census Bureau dataset from 2018.

2020 Election Results – Presidential Election

The 2020 Presidential Election results revealed a record breaking number of votes cast. All 50 states and the District of Columbia certified their election results and each states’ electors have cast their votes, including at least seven AI/AN electors as reported by *Indian Country Today*. Joe Biden received 306 Electoral College votes that exceeded the necessary 270 to win, and he is the President-Elect.

The NCAI Policy Research Center tracked the Electoral College (presidential) races in 27 states in our final Native Vote report prior to Election Day, including Maine and Nebraska, both of which split their Electoral College votes based on their Congressional districts. Of those 27 states, the AI/AN voting age population percentage in seven states was larger than the voting margin percentage, or the difference between candidates that determined the winner. That included five of the seven key battleground states that decided the outcome of the presidential election: Arizona, Georgia, Nevada, North Carolina, and Wisconsin. In these states, the AI/AN voting age population percentage was larger than the difference in the voting margin between the two Presidential contenders. These results illustrate the strong potential impact that Native Vote played in those states and the outcome of the presidential election overall. **Table 1** shows the states where the AI/AN voting age population percentage of potential voters was greater than the margin of victory.

Table 1: States with an AI/AN Voting Age Statewide Population Percentage Larger Than the Electoral College Margin of Victory

State	Electoral College Winner	AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage	Electoral College Voting Margin of Victory Percentage
Alaska	Trump	17.6%	10.1%
Arizona	Biden	5.6%	0.3%
Georgia	Biden	1.1%	0.2%
Nevada	Biden	2.6%	2.4%
New Mexico	Biden	11.2%	10.7%
North Carolina	Trump	2.1%	1.4%
Wisconsin	Biden	1.6%	0.7%

Source: 2019 Census Bureau, 2019 Population Estimates, Tables SCPRC-EST2019-18+POP-RES and SC-EST2019-ALLDATA5; 270towin, Accessed on December 10, 2020.

2020 Election Results – Senate Elections

In the Senate, control is currently divided between both major parties, with two races in Georgia moving to runoff elections in January 2021. These runoff elections will determine

control of the Senate. The NCAI Policy Research Center tracked Senate elections in 16 states in our final reports prior to Election Day. Of those 16 states, the AI/AN voting age population percentage in three elections was larger than the voting margin percentage, or the difference between candidates that determined the winner. In two of these elections, the races were extremely close, illustrating the strong potential impact that Native Vote played in those areas if those eligible to vote actually voted. **Table 2** shows the states where the AI/AN voting age population percentage was greater than the margin of victory for the three Senate races.

Table 2: States with an AI/AN Voting Age Statewide Population Percentage Larger Than the Senate Margin of Victory

State	Senate Election Contenders	Senate Race Winner	AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage	Senate Race Voting Margin of Victory Percentage
Alaska	Sullivan v. Gross	Sullivan (R)	17.6%	12.7%
Arizona	McSally v. Kelly	Kelly (D)	5.6%	2.4%
North Carolina	Tillis v. Cunningham	Tillis (R)	2.1%	1.8%

Source: 2019 Census Bureau, 2019 Population Estimates, Tables SCPRC-EST2019-18+POP-RES and SC-EST2019-ALLDATA5; 270twin, Accessed on December 10, 2020.

At present, Democrats hold 48 seats, while Republicans hold 50. To flip control of the Senate, Democrat candidates would need to win both Georgia Senate elections. Both elections went to runoffs because of the close nature of the November voting margins and Georgia’s election regulations. Those margins and current polling is compared below to the AI/AN voting age population percentage in Georgia in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Georgia Senate Runoff Elections, AI/AN Voting Age Statewide Population Percentage, November Voting Margins, and Current Polling Spread

State	Senate Election Contenders	AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage	Senate Race Voting Margin of Victory Percentage	Senate Race Current Polling Spread
Georgia	Perdue v. Ossoff	1.1%	1.8%	0.4%
Georgia	Loeffler v. Warnock	1.1%	7.0%	2.0%

Source: 2019 Census Bureau, 2019 Population Estimates, Tables SCPRC-EST2019-18+POP-RES and SC-EST2019-ALLDATA5; 270twin, Accessed on December 10, 2020; FiveThirtyEight, Accessed on December 10, 2020.

These elections are between incumbent Republican David Perdue and Democrat Jon Ossoff and incumbent Republican Kelly Loeffler and Democrat Raphael Warnock. Senator Loeffler was appointed to office and now seeks election to remain in office. In the November vote, Perdue and Warnock led the Senate races. At present, Jon Ossoff leads by a slim margin of 0.4 percent, which is smaller than the AI/AN voting population percentage in Georgia of 1.1 percent, while Raphael Warnock leads by 2.0 percent according to *FiveThirtyEight* (2020). If the race tightens, the 1.1 percent of AI/AN voters in Georgia can potentially impact the outcome of the race and ultimately the control of the Senate.

2020 Election Results – House of Representatives Elections

In the House of Representatives, Democrats retained control with a total of 222 seats, while Republicans hold 211. While unable to flip control, Republicans were able to gain 10 additional seats. Currently, two seats remain undecided; Iowa’s second district and New York’s twenty-second district currently remain contested.

The NCAI Policy Research Center tracked House elections in 96 Congressional districts in the final reports prior to Election Day. Of those 96 races, the AI/AN voting age population percentage in eight districts was larger than the voting margin percentage or the difference between candidates. Those eight districts also included the two contested races in Iowa and New York. In three of these elections, the races were extremely close, illustrating the strong potential impact that the Native Vote played throughout the country. **Table 4** shows the Congressional districts where the AI/AN voting age population percentage was greater than the margin of victory for the House races.

Table 4: States with an AI/AN Voting Age Statewide Population Percentage Larger Than the House of Representatives Margin of Victory

State	House District	AI/AN District Voting Age Population Percentage	Senate Race Voting Margin of Victory Percentage
Alaska	At-Large	17.6%	9.0%
Arizona	1st District	21.4%	3.2%
California	21st District	0.98%	0.8%
California	25th District	1.05%	0.0%
Iowa	2nd District	0.72%	0.0%
New York	22nd District	0.58%	0.1%
Oklahoma	5th District	6.88%	4.2%
Utah	4th District	1.02%	1.0%

Source: Census Bureau, 2018 Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP) by Race and Ethnicity, Table CVAP 2014-2018 t Year ACS Data; 270town, Accessed on December 10, 2020.

Candidates are separated by extremely close margins in three of the races: California's twenty-fifth district; Iowa's second district; and New York's twenty-second district. The latter two remain contested. In CA-25, only 333 votes separated the two candidates. For the contested races, candidates in IA-02 are only separated by 32 votes, and 182 votes separate candidates in NY-22. These races provide examples of the critical role the Native Vote can play in close elections, even when the voting age population percentage is relatively small in comparison to the rest of the district population.

2020 Election Results – *Gubernatorial & State Legislature Elections*

The NCAI Policy Research Center tracked three competitive elections for governor in our final report prior to Election Day. However, none of the three elections were determined with a margin of victory smaller or close to the AI/AN voting age population percentages for their states.

The NCAI Policy Research Center also tracked 19 upper state legislative houses and 16 lower state legislative houses where elections for ultimate control by one of the major political parties of the state legislature was competitive or potentially competitive. On Election Day, only two chambers flipped control; New Hampshire's upper and lower houses are now controlled by the Republican Party. This outcome coincides with results from other races outside the presidential election or "down ballot" races. While the presidential election was quite competitive, other races for Senate, the House of Representatives, Gubernatorial seats, and state legislatures were far less competitive than the Electoral College and not as competitive or contested as had been expected. Generally, down ballot races usually more closely mirror the presidential election. The results of this election reflect the ability of voters to "split" their ticket or vote for candidates from multiple political parties on their ballot.

2020 Election Results – *Native Candidates*

While no Native U.S. Senate candidates won their elections, of the 14 Native candidates running for the U.S. House of Representatives, five citizens of tribal nations and a single Native Hawaiian candidate won their elections for seats in the House of Representatives. This includes incumbents Tom Cole and Markwayne Mullin of Oklahoma, Deb Haaland of New Mexico, and Sharice Davids of Kansas. They are joined by Yvette Herrell also of New Mexico and Kai Kahele of Hawaii. Three are Republicans and three are Democrats. At the state legislative level, according to *Indian Country Today*, of the 73 American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian candidates running for state legislative office, 49 won or ran unopposed. These results reflect the increasing prominence of the Native Vote and Native civic engagement at large. **Table 5** illustrates the winning or unopposed candidates and the AI/AN voting age population percentage in those districts. Districts with a majority AI/AN voting age population percentage have been italicized.

Table 5: Winning or Unopposed Native State Congressional Candidates and AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage

State	Candidate	District Race	AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage
Alaska	Bryce Edgmon	State House District 37	42.38%
<i>Alaska</i>	<i>Neal Foster</i>	<i>State House District 39</i>	81.59%
<i>Alaska</i>	<i>Donny Olson</i>	<i>State Senate District T</i>	71.15%
<i>Alaska</i>	<i>Tiffany Zulkosky</i>	<i>State House District 38</i>	83.25%
Arizona	Domingo DeGrazia	State House District 10	1.17%
Arizona	Sally Ann Gonzales	State Senate District 3	4.11%
Arizona	Jennifer Jermaine	State House District 18	2.18%
<i>Arizona</i>	<i>Jamescita Peshlakai</i>	<i>State Senate District 7</i>	66.22%
Arizona	Victoria Steele	State Senate District 9	1.48%
<i>Arizona</i>	<i>Arlando Teller</i>	<i>State House District 7</i>	66.22%
<i>Arizona</i>	<i>Myron Tsosie</i>	<i>State House District 7</i>	66.22%
California	James Ramos	State Assembly District 40	0.91%
Kansas	Stephanie Byers	State House District 86	2.76%
Kansas	Christina Haswood	State House District 10	6.11%
Kansas	Ponka-We Victors	State House District 103	1.28%
Minnesota	Jamie Becker-Finn	State House District 42B	2.36%
Minnesota	Heather Keeler	State House District 4A	1.95%
Minnesota	Mary Kunesh-Podein	State Senate District 41	1.57%
<i>Montana</i>	<i>Mike Fox</i>	<i>State Senate District 16</i>	62.32%
Montana	Donavon Hawk	State House District 76	1.35%
Montana	Rhonda Knudsen	State House District 34	4.94%
<i>Montana</i>	<i>Tyson Running Wolf</i>	<i>State House District 16</i>	63.72%
<i>Montana</i>	<i>Jason Small</i>	<i>State Senate District 21</i>	56.30%
<i>Montana</i>	<i>Frank Smith</i>	<i>State House District 31</i>	61.47%
<i>Montana</i>	<i>Sharon Stewart-Peregoy</i>	<i>State House District 42</i>	54.87%
<i>Montana</i>	<i>Marvin Weatherwax</i>	<i>State House District 15</i>	55.95%
<i>Montana</i>	<i>Rynalea Whiteman-Pena</i>	<i>State House District 41</i>	57.63%
<i>Montana</i>	<i>Jonathan Windy Boy</i>	<i>State House District 32</i>	63.23%
<i>New Mexico</i>	<i>Anthony Allison</i>	<i>State House District 4</i>	74.07%
<i>New Mexico</i>	<i>Patricia Roybal Caballero</i>	<i>State House District 13</i>	75.23%
New Mexico	Dorren Wonda Johnson	State House District 5	3.37%
New Mexico	Derrick Lente	State House District 65	4.01%
<i>New Mexico</i>	<i>Georgene Louis</i>	<i>State House District 26</i>	63.11%
<i>New Mexico</i>	<i>Brenda McKenna</i>	<i>State Senate District 9</i>	75.72%

New Mexico	Shannon Pinto	State Senate District 3	3.21%
New Mexico	Benny Shendo Jr.	State Senate District 22	65.04%
Oklahoma	Shane Jett	State Senate District 17	11.45%
Oklahoma	Mark McBride	State House District 53	8.08%
Oklahoma	Collin Walke	State House District 87	4.65%
Oregon	Tawna Sanchez	State House District 43	1.72%
South Dakota	Shawn Bordeaux	State House District 26A	77.35%
South Dakota	Red Dawn Foster	State Senate District 27	68.10%
South Dakota	Troy Heinert	State Senate District 26	50.48%
South Dakota	Peri Pourier	State House District 27	68.01%
South Dakota	Tamara St. John	State House District 1	16.59%
Tennessee	Bryan Terry	State House District 48	0.73%
Washington	Debra Lekanoff	State House District 40	1.83%
Wyoming	Andi Clifford	State House District 33	60.03%
Wyoming	Affie Ellis	State Senate District 8	1.66%

Source: Census Bureau, 2018 Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP) by Race and Ethnicity, Table CVAP 2014-2018 t Year ACS Data; Indian Country Today, Accessed October 30, 2020; Indian Country Today, Accessed November 10, 2020.

In 25 of the elections, Native candidates won in state legislative districts where the AI/AN voting age population percentage was the majority, illustrating the strong impact in the these elections from the Native voting age population in those locations.

This is our final Native Vote report on the 2020 election cycle. To view our final 2020 Native Vote reports before the election, go to the NCAI Policy Research Center publications page at: <https://www.ncai.org/policy-research-center/research-data/prc-publications>

For more information, email research@ncai.org or visit NCAI's Native Vote website at: <http://www.nativevote.org/>

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