



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

POLICY RESEARCH CENTER

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Research Policy Update

Native Vote Regional Report: Great Plains Region

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 share bi-weekly updates on the status of competitive elections during the 2020 election cycle for states in each NCAI region where turnout of the Native Vote may make a difference.



NCAI Great Plains Region – Voting Age Population

For the 2020 election cycle, a number of close races have the potential to be impacted by the number of voting age AI/ANs who vote, especially if they are a significant percentage of the total population in the state. The NCAI Great Plains Region includes the states of Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota, and 20 federally recognized tribal nations have land located within the three states. For the three states in the Great Plains Region, the AI/AN voting age population number and percentage of the overall population for each of the states are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1: AI/AN Voting Age Statewide Population Percentage for States in the Great Plains Region

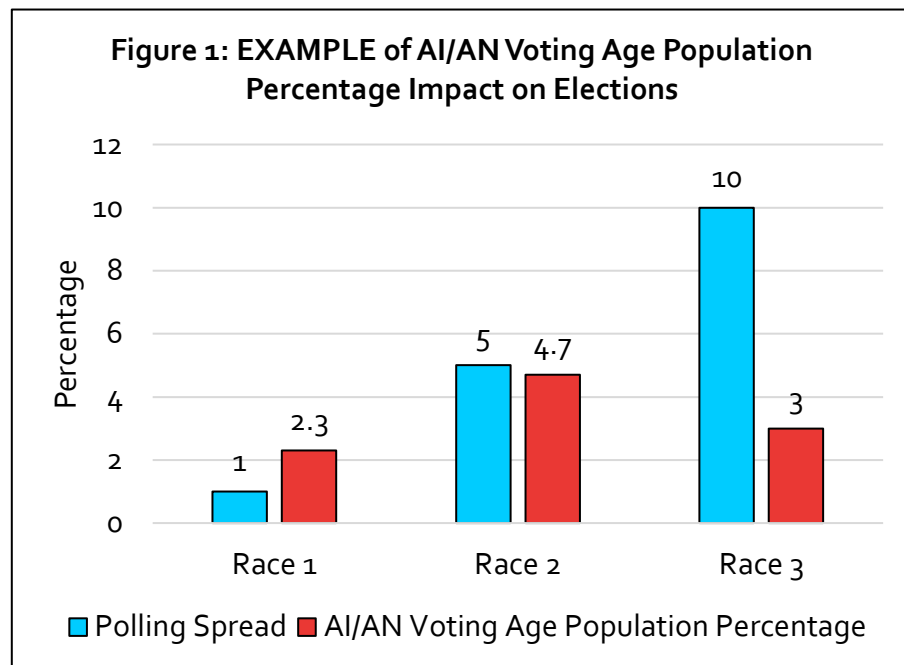
State	2019 State Total Voting Age Population Estimates	2019 AI/AN State Total Voting Age Population Estimates	AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage of State Population
Nebraska	1,458,334	26,099	1.79%
North Dakota	581,891	31,642	5.44%
South Dakota	667,558	54,995	8.24%

Source: 2019 Census Bureau, 2019 Population Estimates, Tables SCPRC-EST2019-18+POP-RES and SC-EST2019-ALLDATA5.

The AI/AN voting age population has the potential to impact competitive national, Congressional district, and state legislative races where the margin of victory is estimated to be similar to the AI/AN voting age population percentage.

Figure 1 illustrates an example of how graphs are used in this report to illustrate how the AI/AN voting age population percentage can impact close elections. The polling difference or margin between candidates is represented as a percent in the blue bars, and the AI/AN voting age population percentage of the total state population is represented in the red bars in the graph.

In *Race 1*, the AI/AN percentage in the example state (red) is larger than the polling difference between candidates (blue) in Race 1. Here AI/AN voters can clearly impact the outcome of the race.



In *Race 2*, the AI/AN voting age population percentage is close to the polling difference between candidates. AI/AN voters in elections like this example can potentially impact the outcome.

In *Race 3*, the AI/AN voting age population percentage is smaller than the polling difference between candidates. In this example, AI/AN voters may not have a big impact on the outcome.

In this report, data on competitive and potentially competitive elections may change over time and is monitored with the *Cook Political Report*, which is a non-partisan newsletter that regularly analyzes elections at the national and state level. The *Cook Political Report* ranks races as tossups, with either candidate having a possibility to succeed, or as “leaning” or “likely” to result in a specific outcome, Democratic (“D”) or Republican (“R”).

This report also uses current polling on competitive races as collected by *FiveThirtyEight*, which is a news media source and national polling clearinghouse. 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. These reports are compiled using the NCAI regions, which may differ from other organizational or federal department regional designations for tribal nations. The reports for each state in this NCAI region are illustrated below.

NCAI Great Plains Region – Nebraska



In Nebraska, the latest *Cook Political Report* shows two competitive and potentially competitive races. **Table 2** illustrates the competitive races for Nebraska, the *Cook Political Report* ranking, the voting electorate or district, and the AI/AN voting age population percentage in those districts. The races include the Electoral College (Presidential) race and one Congressional district race. The Electoral College race rankings are unique in Nebraska. Though

AI/ANs overall in Nebraska constitute 1.79% of the voting age population percentage, Nebraska “splits” its five Electoral College votes. Two votes are awarded to the statewide winner, while three are split between the winners in its three Congressional districts. The statewide Electoral College race and the Electoral College races in Nebraska’s first and third districts are not competitive at this time and all rank certain for Republican outcomes, while Nebraska’s Electoral College race in the second district ranks competitive and possibly may result in a Democratic outcome, or “Lean-D.” The Congressional race in Nebraska’s second district ranks as a tossup, with a slight lean toward a Republican outcome, or “Tossup-R,” by *Cook Political Report*.

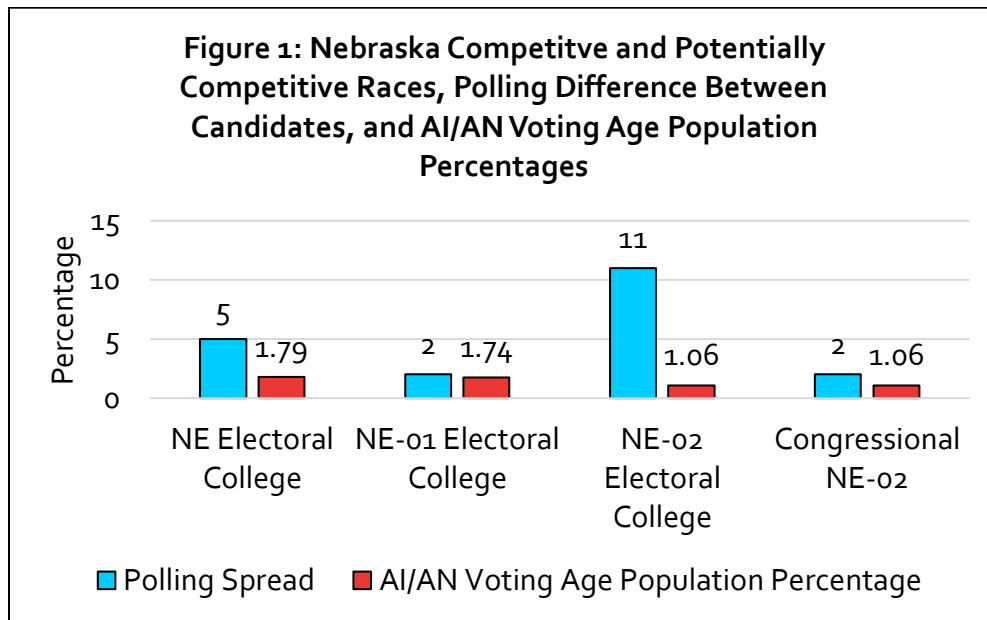
Table 2: Nebraska Competitive and Potentially Competitive Elections

Race	<i>Cook Political Report</i> Ranking	Electorate	AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage
Electoral College (Statewide)	Solid-R	Statewide	1.79%
Electoral College 1st District	Solid-R	Congressional District	1.74%
Electoral College 2nd District	Lean-D	Congressional District	1.06%
Electoral College 3rd District	Solid-R	Congressional District	1.77%
Congressional 2nd District	Tossup-R	Congressional District	1.06%

Source: 2019 Census Bureau, 2019 Population Estimates, Tables SCPRC-EST2019-18+POP-RES and SC-EST2019-ALLDATA5; Census Bureau, 2018 Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP) by Race and Ethnicity, Table CVAP 2014-2018 t Year ACS Data; *Cook Political Report*, Accessed October, 30, 2020.

AI/AN voters can impact the outcomes of races where the current polling shows the candidates are expected to receive a similar percentage of votes and in areas where the percent of AI/AN voters is larger than the difference in polling percentages between the candidates.

Figure 2 illustrates the AI/AN voting age population percentages and recent polling spread or percent margins for the Electoral College races and the Congressional district race in Nebraska. In both the Congressional race and the Electoral College race in Nebraska’s first district, the AI/AN voter percentage is close to current polling. AI/AN voters can impact the outcome in these races if they tighten. No polling is available for Nebraska’s third district as it is not competitive.



Source: 2019 Census Bureau, 2019 Population Estimates, Tables SCPRC-EST2019-18+POP-RES and SC-EST2019-ALLDATA5; Census Bureau, 2018 Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP) by Race and Ethnicity, Table CVAP 2014-2018 t Year ACS Data; FiveThirtyEight, Accessed October 30, 2020.

The *Cook Political Report* does not consider Nebraska’s upper or lower state legislative houses to be competitive or potentially competitive, and no Native candidates are running for state legislative office in Nevada according to *Indian Country Today*.

NCAI Great Plains Region – North Dakota

North Dakota Competitive & Potentially Competitive Races

3 Native Candidates

While North Dakota does not have competitive races for Senate, Governor, Electoral College, Congressional district races, or state legislative houses, three Native candidates are running for office in North Dakota according to *Indian Country Today*.

Table 3 illustrates each Native candidate running for state legislative office, their district race, and the AI/AN voting age population percentage in those state legislative districts.

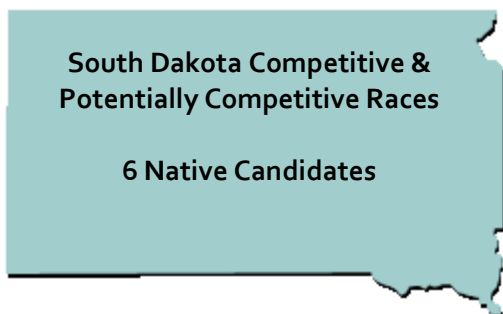
Table 3: North Dakota State Congressional Candidates and AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage

Candidate	District Race	AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage
Lisa Finley-DeVille	State Senate District 4	27.14%
Thomasina Mandan	State House District 4	27.14%
Tracey Wilkie	State House District 16	2.58%

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.

For North Dakota, all Native candidates are running for state legislative office in districts that have over 2% AI/AN voting age population percentages. In upcoming North Dakota legislative district elections, AI/AN voters can impact the outcomes of these races if they are close.

NCAI Great Plains Region – South Dakota



While South Dakota does not have competitive races for Senate, Governor, Electoral College, Congressional district races, or state legislative houses, six Native candidates are running for office according to *Indian Country Today*.

Table 4 illustrates each Native candidate running for state legislative office, their district race, and the AI/AN voting age population percentage in those state legislative districts.

Table 4: South Dakota State Congressional Candidates and AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage

Candidate	District Race	AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage
Shawn Bordeaux	State House District 26A	77.35%
Red Dawn Foster	State Senate District 27	68.10%
Troy Heinert	State Senate District 26	50.48%
Peri Pourier	State House District 27	68.01%
Tamara St. John	State House District 1	16.59%
Ernest Weston Jr.	State House District 27	68.01%

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.

For South Dakota, Native candidates have a majority AI/AN voting age population percentage in all but one state legislative district election. AI/AN voters can impact the outcomes of these races.

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

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