



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

POLICY RESEARCH CENTER

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Research Policy Update

Native Vote Regional Report: Rocky Mountain 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 Rocky Mountain 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 Rocky Mountain Region includes the states of Montana and Wyoming, and 10 federally recognized tribal nations have land located within the two states. For the states in the Rocky Mountain 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 Rocky Mountain Region

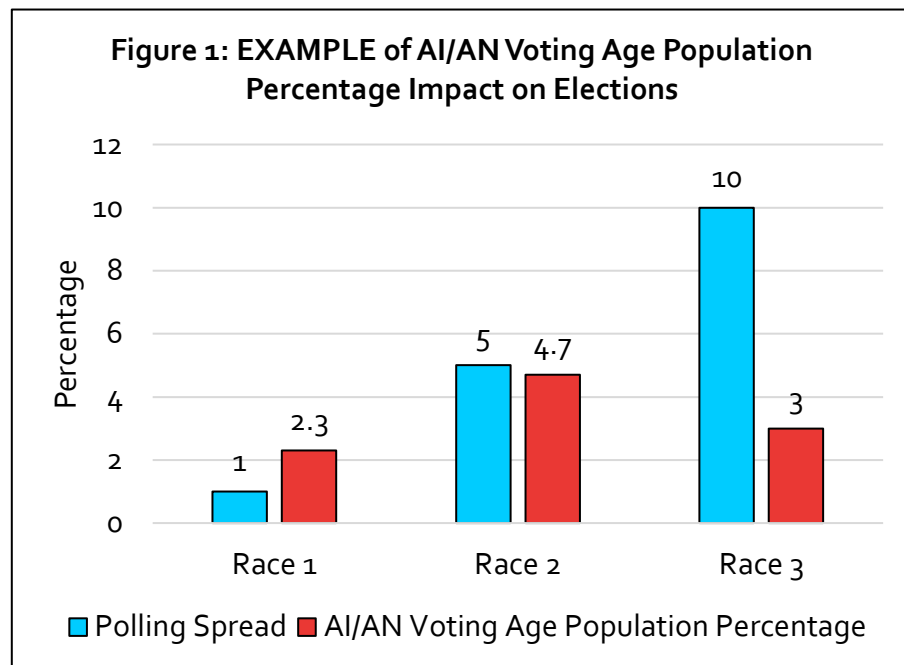
State	2019 State Total Voting Age Population Estimates	2019 AI/AN State Total Voting Age Population Estimates	AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage of State Population
Montana	840,190	58,130	6.92%
Wyoming	445,025	14,469	3.25%

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 Rocky Mountain Region – Montana



In Montana, the latest *Cook Political Report* shows four competitive races. **Table 2** illustrates the competitive races for Montana, the *Cook Political Report* ranking, the voting electorate or district, and the AI/AN voting age population percentage in the district. The Electoral College (Presidential) race ranks as potentially competitive and likely to result in a Republican outcome, or “Likely-R.” Both the Senate and gubernatorial races rank as competitive and

tossups. The at-large Congressional district race ranks competitive and possibly may result in a Republican outcome, or “Lean-R.”

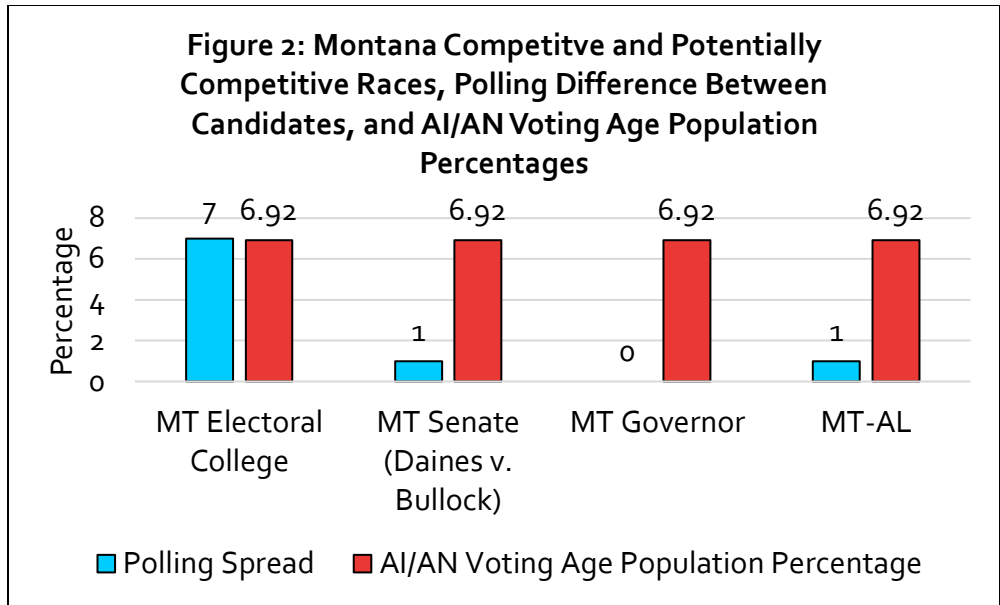
Table 2: Montana Competitive and Potentially Competitive Elections

Race	<i>Cook Political Report</i> Ranking	Electorate	AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage
Senate (Daines v. Bullock)	Tossup	Statewide	6.92%
Electoral College	Likely-R	Statewide	6.92%
Governor	Tossup	Statewide	6.92%
Congressional At-Large District	Lean-R	Congressional District	6.92%

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 races where the current polling shows the candidates are expected to gain 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, Senate, gubernatorial and Congressional district races in Montana. The AI/AN voting age population percentage in all the races is larger than the current polling differences between candidates. AI/AN voters can impact the outcome of these close races.



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.

In Montana, 14 Native candidates are running for state legislative office according to *Indian Country Today* (2020). **Table 3** describes each Native candidate, their district race, and the AI/AN voting age population percentage in the district.

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

Candidate	District Race	AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage
Jade Bahr	State House District 50	7.58%
Barbara Bessette	State House District 24	5.08%
Mike Fox	State Senate District 16	62.32%
Donavon Hawk	State House District 76	1.35%
Rhonda Knudsen	State House District 34	4.94%
Bruce Meyers	State House District 32	63.23%
Rae Peppers	State Senate District 21	56.30%
Tyson Running Wolf	State House District 16	63.72%
Jason Small	State Senate District 21	56.30%
Frank Smith	State House District 31	61.47%
Sharon Stewart-Peregoy	State House District 42	54.87%
Marvin Weatherwax	State House District 15	55.95%
Rynalea Whiteman-Pena	State House District 41	57.63%
Jonathan Windy Boy	State House District 32	63.23%

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.

In all but a single race for Montana, the Native candidates have over 4% of AI/AN voting age population percentages in their districts and a majority in 10 of the races. In these races, AI/AN voters can impact the outcomes if the races are close.

NCAI Rocky Mountain Region – Wyoming

Wyoming Competitive & Potentially Competitive Races

4 Native Candidates

In Wyoming, the latest *Cook Political Report* does not rank any Senate, Electoral College, gubernatorial, or Congressional district races as competitive or potentially competitive. However, there is a Native candidate running for Congressional office in Wyoming according to *Indian Country Today*. **Table 4** illustrates the Native candidate’s Congressional race for Wyoming, the *Cook Political Report* ranking, the voting electorate or district, and the AI/AN voting age population percentage in the district.

For Wyoming’s at-large Congressional district, Native candidate Lynette Grey Bull is challenging incumbent Liz Cheney according to *Indian Country Today*.

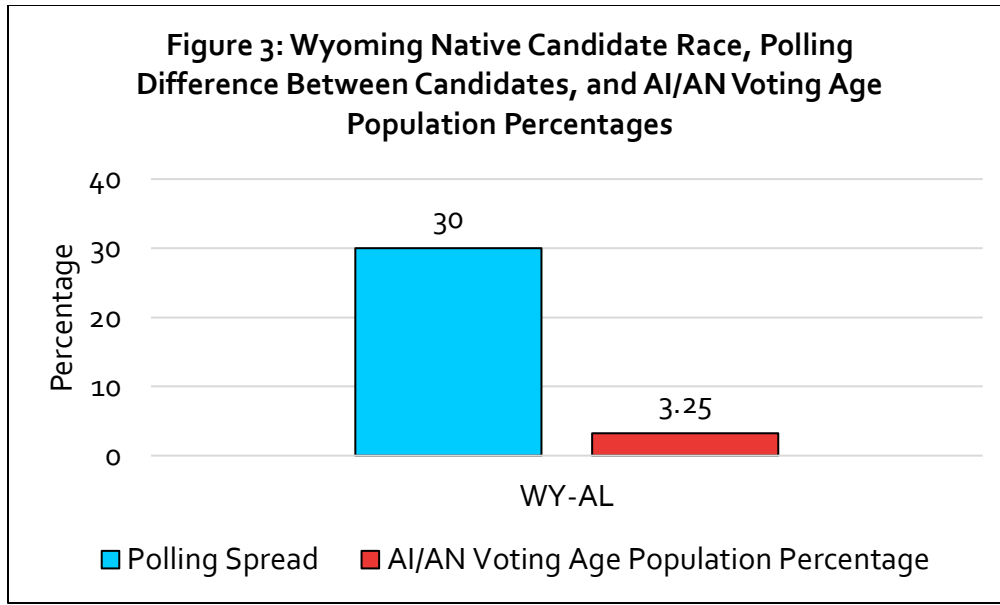
Table 4: Wyoming Native Candidate Congressional Election

Race	<i>Cook Political Report</i> Ranking	Electorate	AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage
Congressional At-Large District	Unranked	Statewide	3.25%

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; Indian Country Today, Accessed October 30, 2020.

AI/AN voters can impact races where the current polling shows the candidates are expected to gain 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.

There is no current polling for the Wyoming race. Instead, the 2018 margin of victory has been used for comparison and that race was won with a 33.8% difference between candidates (*27otowin*, 2020). **Figure 3** illustrates the AI/AN voting age population percentages and the past margin of victory for the Congressional district race in Wyoming.



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; 270twin, Accessed September 17, 2020.

In Wyoming, three Native candidates are running for state legislative office, according to *Indian Country Today* (2020). **Table 5** describes each Native candidate, their district race, and the AI/AN voting age population percentage in the district.

Table 5: Wyoming State Congressional Candidates and AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage

Candidate	District Race	AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage
Andi Clifford	State House District 33	60.03%
Affie Ellis	State Senate District 8	1.66%
Valaira Whiteman	State House District 33	60.03%

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.

In one of the races, the AI/AN voting age population percentage is below 2%, and for the other two, AI/AN voters constitute a majority. In these races, AI/AN voters can impact the outcomes of the races.

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

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