



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

POLICY RESEARCH CENTER

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Research Policy Update *Native Vote Regional Report: Southern Plains and Eastern Oklahoma Regions*

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 Southern Plains and Eastern Oklahoma Regions – 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 Southern Plains and Eastern Oklahoma Regions include the states of Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. Forty-five federally recognized tribal nations and two state-recognized tribal nations have land within the region. For the states in the Southern Plains and Eastern Oklahoma Regions, the AI/AN voting age population number and percentage of the overall population for each of the states is shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1: AI/AN Voting Age Statewide Population Percentage for States in the Southern Plains and Eastern Oklahoma Regions

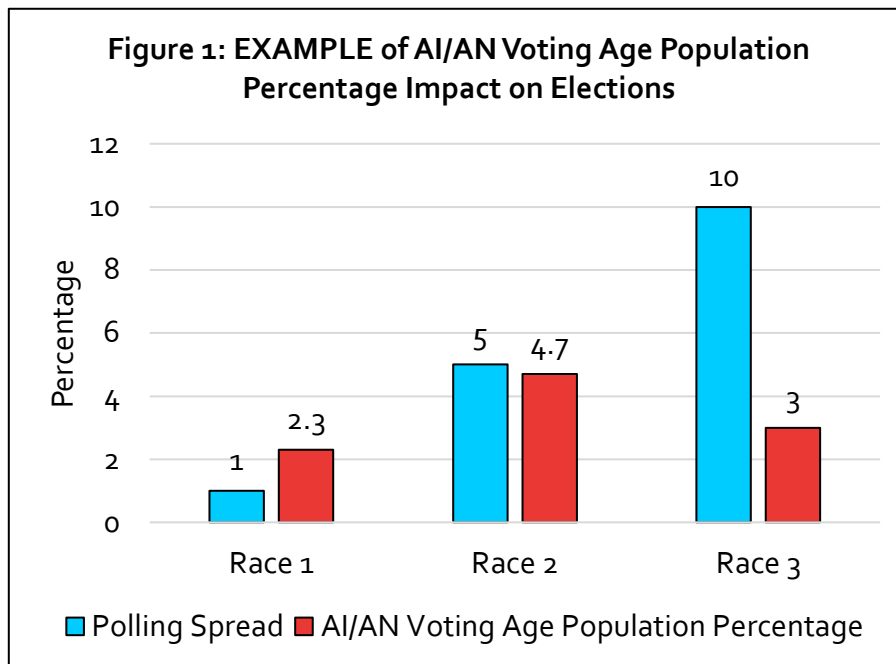
State	2019 State Total Voting Age Population Estimates	2019 AI/AN State Total Voting Age Population Estimates	AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage of State Population
Kansas	2,213,064	49,333	2.23%
Oklahoma	3,004,733	374,436	12.46%
Texas	21,596,071	356,739	1.65%

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 Southern Plains and Eastern Oklahoma Regions – Kansas

Kansas Competitive & Potentially Competitive Races

- 1 Senate Race**
- 1 Electoral College Race**
- 1 Congressional District Races Both Upper and Lower State Legislative Houses**
- 4 Native Candidates**

In Kansas, the latest *Cook Political Report* shows four competitive or potentially competitive races. **Table 2** illustrates the competitive race for Kansas, the *Cook Political Report* ranking, the voting electorate or district, and the AI/AN voting age population percentage in the district. The races include the Senate race between Barbar Bollier and Roger Marshall, the Electoral College (Presidential) race, and the second and third Congressional district races. In addition, a Native candidate is running for reelection in the

third Congressional district of Kansas, Representative Sharice Davids. The race is not considered competitive. The Senate race ranks competitive and possibly may result in a Republican outcome, or “Lean-R.” The Electoral College race and the Kansas second Congressional district race both rank potentially competitive and likely to result in Republican outcomes, or “Likely-R.” The third Congressional district ranks potentially competitive and likely to result in a Democratic outcome, or “Likely-D.” *Cook Political Report* also ranks control of the Kansas’ state legislative houses to be potentially competitive. Both the upper and lower state legislative houses rank likely to result in Republican wins, or “Likely-R.”

Table 2: Kansas Competitive, Potentially Competitive, and Native Candidate Elections

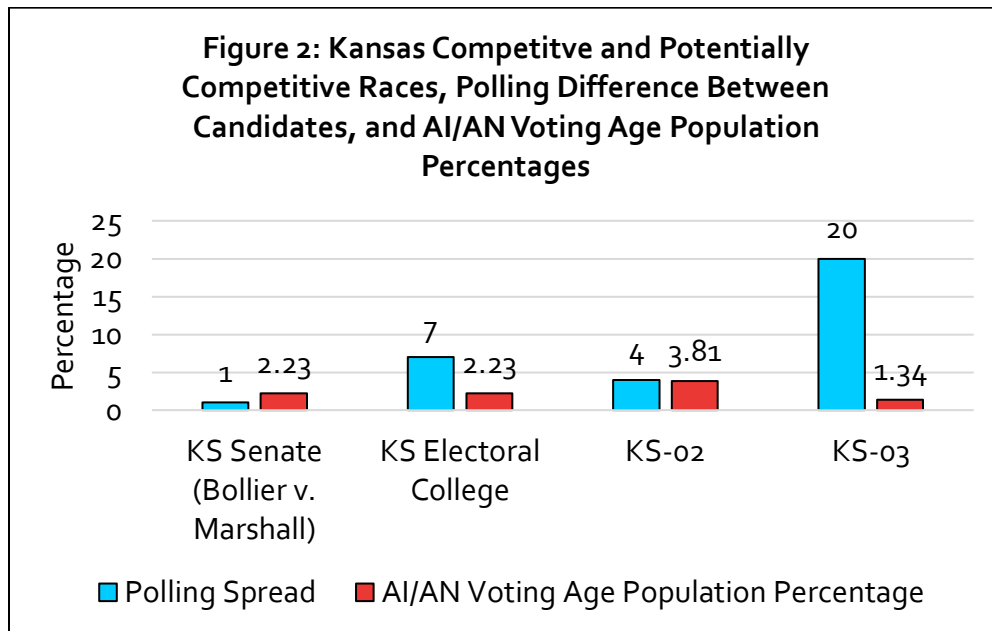
Race	<i>Cook Political Report</i> Ranking	Electorate	AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage
Senate (Bollier v. Marshall)	Lean-R	Statewide	2.23%
Electoral College	Likely-R	Statewide	2.23%
Congressional 2nd District	Likely-R	Congressional District	3.81%
Congressional 3rd District	Unranked	Congressional District	1.34%
State Legislative Upper House	Likely-R	State Legislative District	Varies by District

State Legislative Lower House	Likely-R	State Legislative District	Varies by District
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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 percentage and recent polling spread or percent margin for the Senate, Electoral College, and Congressional district races in Kansas. In the Senate race, the AI/AN voting age population percentage is larger than the current polling difference between candidates. In addition, the AI/AN percentage in Kansas' second district is close to the polling difference. AI/AN voters can impact the outcomes 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 addition to competitive state legislative houses, three Native candidates are running for state legislative office according to *Indian Country Today*. **Table 3** describes each Native candidate, their district race, and the AI/AN voting age population percentage in their district.

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

Candidate	District Race	AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage
Stephanie Byers	State House District 86	2.76%
Christina Haswood	State House District 10	6.11%
Ponka-We Victors	State House District 103	1.28%

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 Kansas, the AI/AN voting age population percentage in the state house districts range from as low as 1.28% in incumbent Ponka-We Victor’s district to 6.11% in state house district 10.

NCAI Southern Plains and Eastern Oklahoma Regions – Oklahoma



In Oklahoma, the latest *Cook Political Report* ranks a single Congressional district race as potentially competitive. **Table 4** illustrates the competitive race for Oklahoma, the *Cook Political Report* ranking, the voting electorate or district, and the AI/AN voting age population percentage in the district. Oklahoma’s fifth district ranks competitive and as a tossup, with a slight lean toward a Democratic outcome, or “Tossup-D.” The other two Congressional district races with Native candidates are not considered

competitive by the *Cook Political Report* where incumbents Tom Cole and Markwayne Mullin are running in Oklahoma’s fourth and second districts. Native candidate Danyell Lanier is also running in Oklahoma’s second Congressional district.

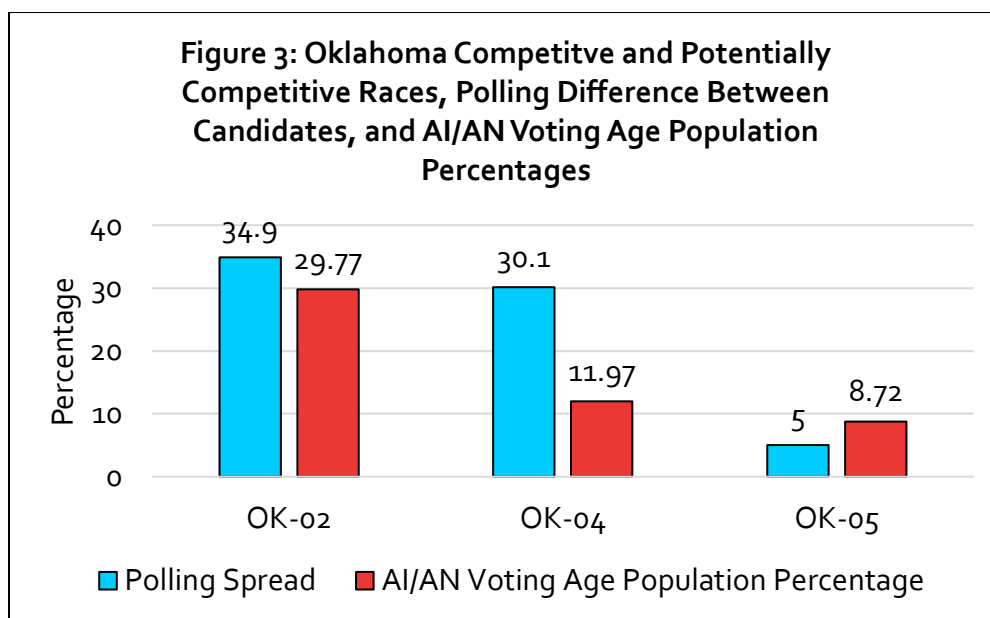
Table 4: Oklahoma Competitive, Potentially Competitive, and Native Candidate Elections

Race	<i>Cook Political Report</i> Ranking	Electorate	AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage
Congressional 2nd District	Unranked	Congressional District	29.77%
Congressional 4th District	Unranked	Congressional District	11.97%
Congressional 5th District	Tossup-D	Congressional District	8.72%

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 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 3 illustrates the AI/AN voting age population percentages and recent polling spread or percent margins for the Congressional district race in Oklahoma. For Oklahoma’s second and fourth districts, current polling is not available. However, the previous margins of victory for the incumbent Native candidates, Mullin and Cole, have been used for comparison. In the fifth Congressional district, the AI/AN percentage is larger than the current polling spread. AI/AN voters can impact the outcome of this race. For Oklahoma’s second district, the AI/AN percentage is close to the past margin of victory. If the race is tighter this year, AI/AN voters could impact the outcome of the race.



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; 27otowin, Accessed September 17, 2020; FiveThirtyEight, Accessed October 30, 2020.

The *Cook Political Report* does not rank control of the Oklahoma state legislative houses as competitive, and six Native candidates are running for state legislative office in the state according to *Indian Country Today*. **Table 5** describes each Native candidate, their district race, and the AI/AN voting age population percentage in their district.

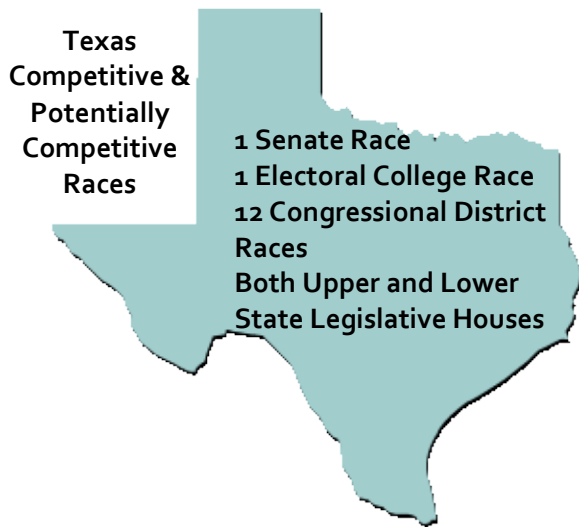
Table 5: Oklahoma State Congressional Candidates and AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage

Candidate	District Race	AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage
Chelsey Branham	State House District 83	4.94%
Shane Jett	State Senate District 17	11.45%
Mark McBride	State House District 53	8.08%
Collin Walke	State House District 87	4.65%
Summer Wesley	State House District 100	3.52%
Jennifer Wilkinson	State Senate District 45	5.95%

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.

Within Oklahoma, all Native candidates are running in state districts where the AI/AN voting age population percentage is over 3%. AI/AN voters can impact the outcomes of these state legislative races if they are close.

NCAI Southern Plains and Eastern Oklahoma Regions – Texas



In Texas, the latest *Cook Political Report* shows 14 competitive and potentially competitive races. **Table 6** illustrates the competitive races for Texas, 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 Senate race between incumbent John Cornyn and challenger M.J. Hegar, the Electoral College race, and 12 Congressional district races. The Senate and Electoral College races both rank competitive and a tossup. The second, sixth, twenty-fifth, and thirty-first Congressional districts all rank potentially competitive and likely to result in Republican outcomes, or “Likely-R.” The third

and tenth districts rank competitive and potentially to result in Republican outcomes, or “Lean-R.” The seventh and thirty-second districts rank potentially competitive and likely to result in Democratic outcomes, or “Likely-D.” The twenty-first, twenty-second, and twenty-fourth districts all rank competitive and as tossups, with slight leans toward Republican outcomes, or “Tossup-R.” Finally, the twenty-third district ranks competitive and potentially to result in a Democratic outcome, or “Lean-D.” *Cook Political Report* also considers control of

Texas’s upper and lower state legislative houses to be competitive or potentially competitive. Texas’ upper state legislative house ranks as potentially competitive and likely to result in a Republican win, or “Likely-R.” The Texas’ lower state legislative house ranks competitive, and possibly may result in a Republican win, or “Lean-R.”

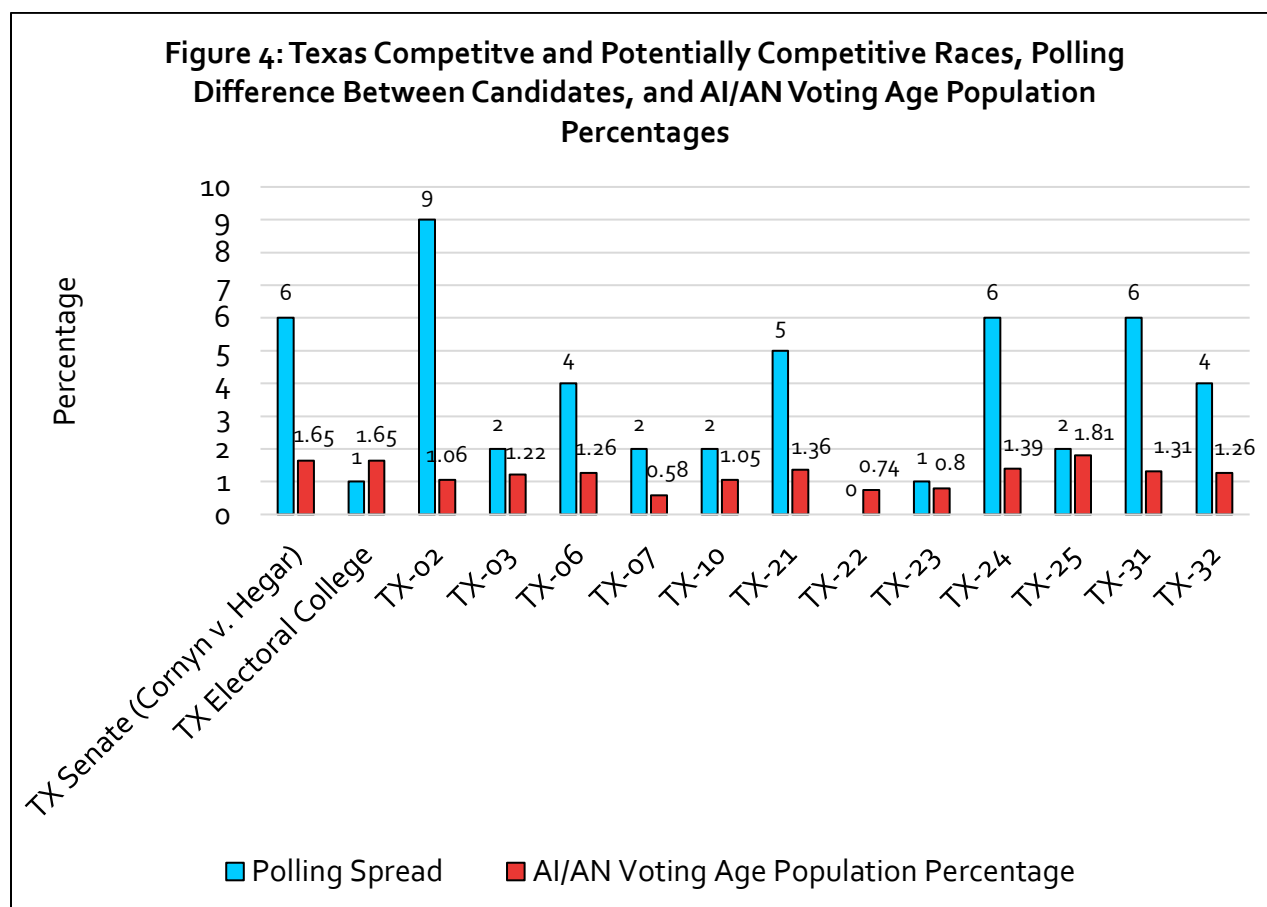
Table 6: Texas Competitive and Potentially Competitive Elections

Race	<i>Cook Political Report</i> Ranking	Electorate	AI/AN Voting Age Population Percentage
Senate (Cornyn v. Hegar)	Lean-R	Statewide	1.65%
Electoral College	Tossup	Statewide	1.65%
Congressional 2nd District	Likely-R	Congressional District	1.06%
Congressional 3rd District	Lean-R	Congressional District	1.22%
Congressional 6th District	Likely-R	Congressional District	1.26%
Congressional 7th District	Likely-D	Congressional District	0.58%
Congressional 10th District	Lean-R	Congressional District	1.05%
Congressional 21st District	Tossup-R	Congressional District	1.36%
Congressional 22nd District	Tossup-R	Congressional District	0.74%
Congressional 23rd District	Lean-D	Congressional District	0.80%
Congressional 24th District	Tossup-R	Congressional District	1.39%
Congressional 25th District	Likely-R	Congressional District	1.81%
Congressional 31st District	Likely-R	Congressional District	1.31%
Congressional 32nd District	Likely-D	Congressional District	1.26%
State Legislative Upper House	Likely-R	State Legislative District	Varies by District
State Legislative Lower House	Lean-R	State Legislative District	Varies by District

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 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 4 illustrates the AI/AN voting age population percentages and recent polling spread or percent margins for the Senate, Electoral College and Congressional district races in Texas. In the Electoral College race and the third and twenty-first districts, the AI/AN population is larger than the current polling difference between candidates. AI/AN voters can impact the outcomes in these 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.

Though the *Cook Political Report* ranks control of both the upper and lower Texas state legislative houses as competitive, no Native candidates are running for office in Texas according to *Indian Country Today*.

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

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