



NAVAJO NATION HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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NNHRC encourages Navajo citizens to provide testimony at the AIRC public hearing in Flagstaff tonight at 6 p.m.

To protect voting rights and "Community of Interest" in sacred sites

ST. MICHAELS, Ariz.—The Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission encourages testimony in support of the adopted draft congressional and draft legislative maps to support the **community of interest** of sacred sites at the Arizona Independent Redistricting Commission's public hearing tonight at 6 p.m., at City Hall at 211 West Aspen Ave., in Flagstaff, Ariz.

Arizona's IRC adopted its draft legislative map and its draft congressional map early this month for redistricting efforts, and seeks public comment about the legislative and congressional maps. To see the maps, visit www.nnhrc.navajo-nsn.gov/redistricting.html or www.azredistricting.org.

What's unique about the Arizona in the southwest is its federal recognition for racially discriminating against minority peoples in terms of voting rights, this is why it is known as a covered jurisdiction or as a Section 5 state.

Prior to 1948, Arizona largely excluded indigenous peoples from the electoral process due to the guardian-ward relationship that exists between Indian nations and the federal government even though indigenous peoples were granted the right to vote in 1924. Although, indigenous peoples had the right to vote, indigenous peoples could not vote until they could cast a "meaningful ballot" which meant they were required to pass literacy tests in order to vote. The Voting Rights Act and U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Oregon v. Mitchell* effectively banned the use of literacy tests because they were unconstitutional.

Because Arizona is a covered jurisdiction in terms of voting rights, NNHRC has been directed by the Navajo Nation Speaker to address redistricting efforts for the Navajo Nation in states it is located: Arizona, New Mexico and Utah.

For Arizona, the adopted draft legislative maps and the draft congressional maps up for public comment are supported by the Navajo Nation, including NNHRC.

The adopted legislative map meets and exceeds the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and it should sail through the U.S. Department of Justice or U.S. District Court preclearance

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process. It maintains the “Community of Interest” as it keeps the Navajo “Ranches” and sacred sites intact in the district the Navajo Nation is located in (meaning the San Francisco Peaks); and it maintains two border towns: Page and Winslow.

The adopted congressional map creates a vast rural Congressional District 1 from the northern Navajo Nation border to the border of Mexico, making headway in sending a Native American from Arizona to Congress. The congressional district includes most indigenous nations’ located in Arizona. It upholds the Voting Rights Act of 1965; and keeps the Navajo “Ranches” and sacred sites intact in District 1.

NNHRC and the Naabik’iyati’ Committee Redistricting Workgroup, which consists of five Navajo Nation Council Delegates, two from Arizona, two from New Mexico and one from Utah, want to ensure that Navajo people have the equal opportunity to elect a candidate of their choice to represent them in areas like the Sheriff seat, County seat, and State and U.S. seats and seek your public testimony at Arizona’s IRC public hearings.

The Navajo Nation’s redistricting workgroup including NNHRC, diligently put forward the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to protect Navajo voting rights and provided extensive testimony at Arizona’s IRC hearings each day last week for the legislative and congressional redistricting process. That proactive endeavor reflects in the adopted draft legislative and draft congressional maps put forward by the Navajo Nation with the support of many indigenous nations’ in Arizona.

For more information to define what redistricting means for the Navajo Nation, visit the NNHRC website at www.nnhrc.navajo-nsn.gov/redistricting.html.

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AIRC Public Hearings are open to the public are as follows on or near the Navajo Nation.

- 1 p.m. (MDT)/12 noon (MST), Friday, October 14, 2011, at the Navajo Nation Museum, Hwy. 264 & Loop Road in Window Rock, Navajo Nation (AZ)
- 10 a.m. (MDT)/9 a.m. (MST) on Monday, October 17, 2011, at the Moenkopi Legacy Inn & Suites, Junction Hwy 160 in Tuba City, Arizona.

