



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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Navajo Nation opposes Arizona bills that would suppress Navajo voters

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer strongly oppose Arizona Senate Bill 1713 and Senate Bill 1485, which would disenfranchise eligible Navajo voters in the state of Arizona in future elections. In the 2020 general election last November, Navajo voters came out in record numbers and changed the outcome of several elections in the state, but if these bills are passed and signed into law by Gov. Doug Ducey, those numbers will decrease.

“The power and impact of Navajo voters was displayed in the 2020 elections and now we have several bills being pushed through the Arizona legislative body, which would severely suppress Navajo voter participation. We have 22 tribal nations in the state of Arizona that were not consulted and did not have a seat at the table when these bills were crafted and moved through the legislative committees. Tribes are united in opposition to these measures and we demand that the State Senate vote down these measures, and if they do pass, Governor Ducey must veto these bills to protect the voting rights of all Native American people in the state of Arizona,” said President Nez.

Senate Bill 1713 would require individuals to provide a date of birth and driver’s license number or voter registration number in order to vote by mail. Many Navajo citizens, especially the elderly, have challenges obtaining a driver’s license. The law does not make any provision for Tribal Census or Tribal IDs, which are considered valid forms of identification for voting purposes in the state of Arizona. In addition, finding a person’s voter registration number is very difficult for most people. The proposed law would also require that ballots be thrown out if a number is not legible or written incorrectly.

Senate Bill 1485 would remove thousands of current registered voters from the permanent early voter list if they have not voted in two consecutive primary and general elections. This bill was voted down in the State Senate last week, but is likely to be reconsidered soon.

The bills are an unprecedented attack on our democracy and on Navajo citizen’s right to vote. If passed and signed into law, S.B. 1485 will remove approximately 150,000 current registered

voters off the permanent early voter list. S.B. 1713 will work to deny Navajo voters the ability to vote by mail-in ballot.

President Nez pointed out that if S.B. 1713 is passed into law and signed by Gov. Ducey, it will have a disproportionate impact on Native American voters. In contrast to a majority of Arizona citizens, Navajo people live in extremely rural conditions. The population density on the Nation is 6.3 per square mile, as compared to the statewide density of 56.3. For Navajo voters, the physical vastness and rural settings of the Nation create unique challenges for Navajo citizens in casting their ballots in state and federal elections. This physical isolation coupled with lower income levels and language barriers makes voting a challenging task for many Navajo citizens. The requirement of adding additional identification that Navajo voters may not readily have on hand, adds a measure of difficulty to mail-in ballots.

“The Navajo Nation opposes these bills because it suppresses voting, especially Native American voting. Native Americans already face steep obstacles when it comes to voting and the passage of these bills would only exacerbate the problem. On the Navajo Nation, thousands of our citizens drive many miles to vote during each election and their voting rights should be protected and the state of Arizona should be doing more to encourage voter participation,” said Vice President Lizer.

He added, “The Navajo Nation challenges the Arizona State Legislators to visit the rural Native American communities, to understand how this bill could potentially impact voters. We cannot expect to be in agreement, unless first-hand experience from state legislators is reported back to the Capitol. We appreciate the state legislators for providing a bill that can protect legitimate elections to reduce fraudulent votes, but we welcome them to consult with Tribal Leadership.”

President Nez also noted that Navajo voters already face significant barriers to vote-by-mail including the lack of home mail delivery service. Navajo voters living on the Nation do not receive mail at their homes. Instead, they must rely on post office boxes to receive their mail. Post office boxes on the Nation are limited in number and are often shared by multiple individuals. The Arizona portion of the Nation has 11 post offices and 15 postal providers. These offices are responsible for delivering coverage to 18,000 square miles of land. Post office boxes can be located a great distance from the voter’s rural residence.

The Nez-Lizer Administration continues to work together with state lawmakers and to advocate for voting rights of all Native Americans throughout the state of Arizona.

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