



The Navajo Nation  
Office of the President and Vice President

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**Navajo Nation moves a step closer to extending voting rights settlement with additional requirements with San Juan County, Utah**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – On Tuesday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez joined the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission in speaking in support of a resolution to extend a voting rights settlement between the San Juan County, Utah and the Navajo Nation beyond the March 3, 2021 expiration date to the year 2024.

The San Juan County Commissioners ultimately voted in support of the resolution, which also includes expanded provisions related to voter assistance and early voting, election day polling sites, and requirements for providing election information. The terms of the extended agreement are subject to review and approval by the U.S District Court for the District of Utah.

“The voting rights settlement was a long hard-fought victory that led to new requirements that were implemented and increased voter participation in the recent elections. Despite the challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, our Navajo people came out to vote in numbers that we have never seen before. Our voices were heard and we made tremendous impacts in the outcome of certain elections. I commend the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission for advocating for the Navajo people and working to right the wrongs of the past and provide long-term voting protections for Navajo voters in San Juan County, Utah to ensure that the 1965 Voting Rights Act serves and protects all people,” said President Nez.

On Feb. 22, 2018, San Juan County entered into the settlement agreement that resolved a lawsuit filed by the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission and several individual plaintiffs for violations related to voting procedures that marginalized the rights of Navajo voters.

"The Office of Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission notes that the decision made by the San Juan County during its meeting today is in the right direction. While it is important to see to it that voting rights of all peoples are protected, it is fundamental that Navajo voting rights are protected and respected under the 1965 Voting Rights Act. This Act was passed over 55 years ago, yet Navajo voters continue to struggle to be assured that their voting rights be protected. It is important that an outside agency such as the Federal District Court of Utah oversee the proper ways that San Juan County will assure Navajo voters that their rights are respected. The

conditions are not prime that the county will independently protect Navajo voting rights,” said Office of Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission Executive Director Leonard Gorman.

San Juan County Commissioners Willie Grayeyes and Kenneth Maryboy proposed the extended agreement, which requires additional early voting offices to be setup four weeks prior to the election, additional election day polling locations, and also requires Navajo language radio election ads and information to air on the KTNN 660AM radio station in addition to KNDN 960AM.

The 2018 agreement also required Navajo language interpreters to be available at election polling sites on election day and Navajo translation of the ballot to be posted on the county’s website – these provisions will also be extended in accordance with the resolution approved on Tuesday.

“This is another step in the right direction for the protection of voting rights for the Navajo people. There were many who supported the initial settlement from the grassroots level on up. We truly appreciate the hard work of the San Juan County Commissioners, Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission, the individual plaintiffs, and many others. The extended and expanded provisions under the settlement agreement will help to have more of our Navajo peoples’ voices heard in upcoming elections,” stated Vice President Lizer.

The provisions that were added to the resolution require early voting offices to be opened in the communities of Montezuma Creek, Bluff, Monument Valley, Aneth, Red Mesa, Mexican Water, and Navajo Mountain four weeks prior to the election. On election day, polling locations will be setup at Aneth Chapter, Red Mesa Chapter, Oljato Chapter, Mexican Water Chapter, and Navajo Mountain Chapter.

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