

AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Resolution: 209
(A-24)

Introduced by: Medical Student Section

Subject: Native American Voting Rights

Referred to: Reference Committee B

1 Whereas, our American Medical Association “acknowledges voting is a social determinant of
2 health and significantly contributes to the analyses of other social determinants of health as a
3 key metric”; and
4

5 Whereas, the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) supports medical schools and
6 teaching hospitals facilitating nonpartisan voter registration efforts¹; and
7

8 Whereas, health facilities’ nonpartisan voter registration efforts demonstrate improved civic
9 engagement and are protected by the National Voter Registration Act and IRS code²⁻⁵; and
10

11 Whereas, 1.2 million Native Americans (34%) are not registered to vote due to vast differences
12 in experiences and opportunities, especially for voters on reservations who experience
13 discrimination and unique challenges with voter identification laws (e.g., no addresses on
14 reservations, inability to use tribal-federal membership cards)⁶⁻¹¹; and
15

16 Whereas, the distinct political and dual citizenship status of Native Americans as members of
17 sovereign Tribal nations underscores the importance of their voter participation, as federal and
18 state elected officials are responsible for working with their Tribal governments to enact laws
19 governing Tribal authority and treaty rights⁸; and
20

21 Whereas, as Native Americans comprise over 10% of the electorate in many states, Congress
22 has repeatedly introduced the Native American Voting Rights Act, which would in part establish
23 a Native American voting task force grant program to increase turnout⁸; and
24

25 Whereas, President Biden’s Executive Order on Promoting Access to Voting strongly
26 encourages federal agencies, including Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and Indian Health
27 Service sites to seek designation as voter registration sites¹²; and
28

29 Whereas, other federal health and social programs such as the VHA, Medicaid, and SNAP/WIC
30 offer voter registration services, and the Health Resources and Services Administration even
31 offers guidance for Federally Qualified Health Centers to organize such efforts^{3,13-14}; and
32

33 Whereas, civic engagement efforts are limited at Indian Health Service, Tribal, and Urban Indian
34 Health Programs, which are crucial interfaces with Native American patients and Tribal
35 governments¹⁵⁻¹⁶; therefore be it
36

37 RESOLVED, that our American Medical Association support efforts to engage physicians and
38 other healthcare workers in nonpartisan voter registration efforts in healthcare settings,
39 including emergency absentee ballot procedures for qualifying patients, visitors, and healthcare
40 workers (New HOD Policy); and be it further

1 RESOLVED, that our AMA support the use of independent, nonpartisan commissions to draw
2 districts for both federal and state elections (New HOD Policy); and be it further
3

4 RESOLVED, that our AMA support Indian Health Service, Tribal, and Urban Indian Health
5 Programs becoming designated voter registration sites to promote nonpartisan civic
6 engagement among the American Indian and Alaska Native population. (New HOD Policy)

Fiscal Note: Minimal - less than \$1,000

Received: 4/19/2024

REFERENCES

1. Fact Sheet for Nonpartisan Voter Registration at Health Care Institutions. AAMC. Accessed May 14, 2023. <https://www.aamc.org/advocacy-policy/voterregistration>
2. The National Voter Registration Act Of 1993 (NVRA). US Department of Justice. Published online July 20, 2022. <https://www.justice.gov/crt/national-voter-registration-act-1993-nvra>
3. Tang OY, Wong KE, Ganguli R, et al. Emergency Absentee Voting for Hospitalized Patients and Voting During COVID-19: A 50-State Study. *West J Emerg Med.* 2021;22(4):1000-1009. Published 2021 Jul 15. doi:10.5811/westjem.2021.4.50884
4. Lickiss S, Lowery L, Triemstra JD. Voter Registration and Engagement in an Adolescent and Young Adult Primary Care Clinic. *J Adolesc Health.* 2020;66(6):747-749. doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2019.11.316
5. Chamberlain C, Jaime H, Wohler D. Emergency Patient Voting Initiative in a Community Hospital During a Global Pandemic: Lessons and a Call-to-Action for Expanded Voter Access. *Dela J Public Health.* 2021;7(1):76-77. Published 2021 Jan 21. doi:10.32481/djph.2021.01.015
6. Tucker J, De Leon J, McCool D. Obstacles at Every Turn: Barriers to Political Participation Faced by Native Americans. *Native American Rights Fund.* Published online September 16, 2020. https://vote.narf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/obstacles_at_every_turn.pdf
7. Indian Health Service Voter Registration. *National Congress of American Indians.* Published online 2020. <https://vote.narf.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/ihs-vote-explanation.pdf>
8. Luján BR. Native American Voting Rights Act of 2021.; 2021 <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/2702/text?s=1&r=1&q=%7B%22search%22%3A%22native+american+voting+rights%22%7D>
9. Friel, K., Pablo, E. How Voter Suppression Laws Target Native Americans. *Brennan Center.* Published May 23, 2022. Last Accessed September 17, 2023. <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/how-voter-suppression-laws-target-native-americans>
10. Ferguson-Bohnee, P. How the Native American Vote Continues to be Suppressed. *American Bar Association.* Published February 9, 2020. Last Accessed September 17, 2023. https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/voting-rights/how-the-native-american-vote-continues-to-be-suppressed/
11. Thomas-Lundborg, A., Alvernaz, L. This Law Makes Voting Nearly Impossible for Native Americans in Montana. *American Civil Liberties Union.* Published March 12, 2020. Last Accessed September 17, 2023. <https://www.aclu.org/news/voting-rights/this-law-makes-voting-nearly-impossible-for-native-americans-in-montana>
12. Biden J. Executive Order on Promoting Access to Voting. *The White House.* Published online March 7, 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/03/07/executive-order-on-promoting-access-to-voting>
13. VA promotes greater access to voter information to Veterans and families. *Veterans Affairs.* Published online March 24, 2022. <https://news.va.gov/press-room/va-promotes-greater-access-to-voter-information-to-veterans-and-families>
14. Hess D. Using Medicaid Automatic Voter Registration to Address Persistent Voter Registration Problems: Helping the National Voter Registration Act Achieve its Potential. *Institute for Responsive Government.* Published online June 23, 2023. <https://responsivegoverning.org/research/using-medicare-automatic-voter-registration-to-address-persistent-voter-registration-problems-helping-the-national-voter-registration-act-achieve-its-potential>
15. Title I | Office of Direct Service and Contracting Tribes. Title I | Office of Direct Service and Contracting Tribes. Office of Direct Service and Contracting Tribes. Current as of 2023. <https://www.ihs.gov/odsct/title1/>
16. Martin A, Raja A, Meese H. Health care-based voter registration: a new kind of healing. *International Journal of Emergency Medicine.* Published online April 30, 2021. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12245-021-00351-y>

RELEVANT AMA Policy

Support for Safe and Equitable Access to Voting H-440.805

1. Our AMA supports measures to facilitate safe and equitable access to voting as a harm-reduction strategy to safeguard public health and mitigate unnecessary risk of infectious disease transmission by measures including but not limited to: (a) extending polling hours; (b) increasing the number of polling locations; (c) extending early voting periods; (d) mail-in ballot postage that is free or prepaid by the government; (e) adequate resourcing of the United States Postal Service and election operational procedures; (f) improved access to drop off locations for mail-in or early ballots; and (g) use of a P.O. box for voter registration.

2. Our AMA opposes requirements for voters to stipulate a reason in order to receive a ballot by mail and other constraints for eligible voters to vote-by-mail.
3. Our AMA: (a) acknowledges voting is a social determinant of health and significantly contributes to the analyses of other social determinants of health as a key metric; (b) recognizes that gerrymandering which disenfranchises individuals/communities limits access to health care, including but not limited to the expansion of comprehensive medical insurance coverage, and negatively impacts health outcomes; and (c) will collaborate with appropriate stakeholders and provide resources to firmly establish a relationship between voter participation and health outcomes. [Res. 18, I-21; Appended: Res. 422, A-22]

DRAFT