



OFFICE OF NAVAJO NATION HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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Navajo's Voting Rights in San Juan County Utah.

ST. MICHAELS, NAVAJO NATION (ARIZ) – Since 2011, the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission (“Commission”) has been working to secure the voting rights of Navajo Citizens in State and Federal elections, in Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. One of the very strong concerns is the voting rights of Navajo citizens in San Juan County Utah (“County”), as they were repressed for many years. With current litigation about redistricting county commission, and school board election districts, mail-in ballot and with the recent November 8th general election, Navajo residents in San Juan County want to know the results of the current lawsuits.

In 2014 elections, the county switched over to an all-mail-in ballot voting system. The all mail election closed all polling locations on and around the Navajo Nation. If voters wished to vote in person they would have to travel to the County Clerk’s office in Monticello, UT. The mail-in ballot litigation has successfully reopened three polling locations that were at Navajo Mountain Chapter, Oljato Senior Center and in Montezuma Creek fire station. With the reopening of three polling locations, Navajo voters were able to travel slightly shorter distances to polling places and cast their ballots. The main goal of the lawsuit is to have all eight polling location reopened and the county to provide better language translation services to Navajo citizens, under section 203 of the Voting Rights Act.

In the redistricting case against the County, Judge Robert J. Shelby made the decision that the County Commission and School Board election districts are unconstitutional and the County must redraw both Commission districts and School Board election districts. The County was given the opportunity to draw new, lawful redistricting plans, but unfortunately the County has chosen to create maps that are based on racial quotas in both the School Board and Commission plans. With the current maps also being unconstitutional, the next move for the Navajo Nation is to have a new election in 2017 with constitutional redistricting maps for the County Commission and School Board elections.

As both cases moving forward, the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission will continue to advocate for Navajo voting rights in the County. For more information contact the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission at 928-871-7436.

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