



PRESS RELEASE
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Montana Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Releases Report on Voting Access for Native Americans

The Montana Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights released an [advisory memorandum](#) following a series of web hearings to understand voting rights concerns impacting Native Americans in the state. The Committee heard from the Montana Secretary of State's Office, elected officials, tribal leadership, voting rights organizations, and the legal community.

In this advisory memorandum, the Committee received testimony from speakers in the following areas: election administration, barriers to voting, and solutions to improving access. Through this testimony, the Committee identified several concerns that include significant barriers to voting for Native American tribal members living on reservations have due to long distances to election services, lack of residential mailing addressing, lack of understanding of acceptable IDs, and unreliable and infrequent mail delivery services; continued effort on behalf of elected officials to pass bills that are likely to disenfranchise voters especially regarding ballot collection; racist and hostile sentiment toward Native Americans; and a lack of outreach to tribes in encouraging voter engagement and resolving voting concerns.

The advisory memorandum also includes recommendations directed to the Commission asking for corrective actions from the U.S. Department of the Justice, U.S. Congress, U.S. Postal Service, Montana Legislature, Montana Secretary of State, and county elections offices with a goal of helping address the Committee's concerns.

Committee Chair Gwen Kircher stated: "We have learned through this inquiry that Native Americans living on the reservation have numerous hurdles to overcome in order to exercise their voting rights which include distance to polls, lack of mailing addresses, and relationships with local government which range from good to contemptuous. It is our hope that this memo will inform the public and key policy makers of steps needed to ensure all Montanans have access to the ballot, especially those who may be directly impacted by voting laws passed in this recent legislative session."

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, established by the Civil Rights Act of 1957, is the only independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights and reporting annually on federal civil rights enforcement. Our 51 state Advisory Committees offer a broad perspective on civil rights concerns at state and local levels. For information about the Commission, please visit www.usccr.gov and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).