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## **Secretary of State Toulouse Oliver Convenes Native American Voting Task Force**

*Task Force to Increase Tribal Voter Registration, Education and Election Participation*

SANTA FE – Today at the State Capitol Building, New Mexico Secretary of State Maggie Toulouse Oliver convened the first meeting of the Native American Voting Task Force (NAVTF) that she announced in April of this year.

“Task Force members got off to a great start this morning and began laying the foundation for what they want to accomplish moving forward,” said Secretary of State Toulouse Oliver. “With the next general election only a year away, it’s important that we work together to develop policies and procedures that will increase voter participation and education in our tribal communities. I am confident that this talented group of individuals will find new and creative ways to engage a greater number of Native Americans in the electoral process.”

At today’s meeting, members voted to name former Santo Domingo Pueblo Governor Everett Chavez as the NAVTF Chair and Shiprock Navajo Agency Council President Rick Nez as the Vice Chair.

During the 2017 session of the New Mexico Legislature, Secretary of State Toulouse Oliver worked with Representative Derrick Lente, who introduced legislation that would have required the Secretary to convene just such a task force. The bill passed unanimously in the House of Representatives but didn’t make it to the Senate floor before the session ended.

Native Americans were one of the last ethnic groups to get the right to vote. It wasn’t until 1948, when World War II veteran Miguel Trujillo of the Pueblo of Isleta won a federal lawsuit that secured the right to vote for all New Mexico Native Americans. Historically, Native Americans have some of the lowest voter turnout rates of any ethnic group in the country.

Secretary of State Toulouse Oliver’s task force is made up of representatives from pueblos and tribal communities across New Mexico, including one representative living in an urban area. The task force will be charged with identifying ways to boost voter registration, education and election participation in tribal communities, and will make recommendations to Secretary of State Toulouse Oliver and other elected officials.

**The confirmed members of the Native American Voting Task Force are:**

Former Governor Everett Chavez, Santo Domingo Pueblo, NAVTF Chair  
Council President Rick Nez, Shiprock Navajo Agency, NAVTF Vice Chair

Tohatchi Chapter President Julie Badonie, Navajo Fort Defiance Agency  
President Jamie Henio, Navajo Eastern Agency  
Former Tribal Councilman Arden Kucate, Zuni Pueblo  
Lisa LeFlore Davis, Fort Sill Apache Tribe  
Tribal Councilman Leon K. Reval, Jicarilla Apache Nation  
Eric Spitty, Mescalero Apache Tribe  
Laurie Weahkee, Urban Native American (Albuquerque)  
Linda Yardley-Monteau, Taos Pueblo

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