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Secretary of State Toulouse Oliver Announces Native American Voting Taskforce

Taskforce Goal to Increase Tribal Voter Registration, Education and Election Participation

SANTA FE – Today, New Mexico Secretary of State Maggie Toulouse Oliver announced that she is creating a Native American Voting Taskforce that will be charged with identifying ways to boost voter registration, education and election participation in tribal communities. Secretary Toulouse Oliver made the announcement while addressing the Navajo Voters Coalition Annual Conference.

“It’s imperative that we do all we can to register New Mexico Native Americans to vote, to educate them about the timing of elections and what’s on the ballot, and to get them to the polls to vote,” said Secretary Toulouse Oliver. “I’m confident my Native American Voting Taskforce will generate new and creative ways to effectively engage Native voters and increase their election participation.”

Secretary Toulouse Oliver’s Native American Voting Taskforce will include representatives from the Navajo Nation, the Jicarilla Apache Nation, the Mescalero Apache Tribe, the Fort Sill Apache Tribe, the nineteen pueblos, and a Native American who resides in an urban area. The Task Force will be charged with analyzing the areas of need, making recommendations for election officials across the State, and developing an action plan to address voter registration, voter education and turnout in tribal communities.

During the 2017 session of the New Mexico Legislature, Secretary Toulouse Oliver worked with Representative Derrick Lente, who introduced legislation that would have required the Secretary to convene just such a taskforce. 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. Overall voter turnout for New Mexicans in the 2016 general election was sixty-two percent. However, the voter turnout in all New Mexico Native precincts was only fifty-six percent.

More information about Secretary Toulouse Oliver can be found at www.sos.state.nm.us/, on Facebook at facebook.com/NMSecOfState/ and on Twitter at twitter.com/NMSecOfState.

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