



North Dakota Native Vote
919 S 7th Street
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Bismarck, ND 58504

January 23, 2025

Testimony of Nicole Donaghy, Executive Director North Dakota Native Vote
In opposition to House Bill 1287

Chairman Schauer and members of the Veterans and Government Affairs Committee, my name is Nicole Donaghy. I am the Executive Director of North Dakota Native Vote. I submit this testimony in strong opposition to House Bill 1287. North Dakota Native Vote was founded in 2018 to counteract the harmful effects of the Voter ID bill which required all North Dakota electors to have a physical address on their ID's in order to vote. While seemingly innocuous, the passage of the ID law had the ability to disenfranchise at least 5,000 Native American voters as stated by Daniel L. Hovland, chief judge for the U.S. District Court in North Dakota.

As we have seen with the outcome of the Voter ID law, Tribal communities in North Dakota face significant challenges when it comes to accessing voting. One of the primary issues is still the lack of street addresses on reservations, which are also often required for voter registration. Many tribal citizens live in areas where mail delivery is inconsistent or nonexistent, which further complicates the process of registering to vote. The introduction of a voter registration requirement would disproportionately affect our communities, who already struggle to meet voting requirements due to these limited infrastructure and logistical difficulties.

North Dakota is currently the only state in the union that does not impose voter registration. Our state's tradition of allowing eligible voters to cast ballots without first registering has been a cornerstone of our commitment to accessible elections. I believe that instituting a voter registration system would create unnecessary barriers to participation and could have several unintended consequences. While the intention of such a measure may be to improve the integrity of our elections, it would only serve to deepen the systemic challenges already faced by many North Dakotans, especially those living in tribal communities. Implementing a voter registration requirement could further disenfranchise voters who may encounter difficulties navigating the registration process itself.

As noted in the 2024 Brennan Center study, voter registration has historically been shown to suppress turnout, especially among vulnerable groups like young voters, people with low incomes, and ethnic minorities. By requiring registration, there is a risk of creating barriers—whether intentional or not—that make it harder for certain populations to vote.

Requiring voter registration would also increase the costs associated with conducting elections. The state would need to implement a new infrastructure to manage registration data, update voter rolls regularly, and handle voter registration errors. These changes could divert resources



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from other areas of the election process, including voter outreach and education, which are essential for ensuring that voters are informed and engaged.

The implementation of a voter registration system that does not take these specific challenges into account could lead to lower voter turnout, particularly among those already struggling with barriers to participation. I strongly believe that adding a voter registration requirement in North Dakota would disproportionately affect tribal communities, increase voter apathy, and further complicate an already complex electoral system. I urge the committee to give HB 1287 a Do Not Pass recommendation and instead focus on solutions that simplify and expand access to voting for all eligible voters in North Dakota.

Thank you for your time and consideration.