



Rebuilding
Communities
Through Indian
Self-Reliance

EMPOWER INDIAN COUNTRY – GET OUT AND VOTE A MESSAGE FROM ERNIE STEVENS, JR., CHAIRMAN

Tomorrow, November 2nd, all of America will be going to the polls once again to select new leadership in Congressional, State, Regional, Local and for many, Tribal elections. It is a day for each of us to exercise our most fundamental right and duties we have as American and Tribal citizens and it is the foundation of our government.

Our nation's democratic system is founded on the abiding principles that people consent to be governed. I encourage all of Indian country to take advantage of this opportunity as our voting rights ensure that we have a say in our community's and our country's future.

Recent history has shown that our vote in Indian country has been a critical vote related to the outcome of many of the recent elections. It is important to be part of the empowerment of our people in Indian country and make your voices heard for many reasons. First, by going to the polls in record numbers once again, your vote will solidify the Native voice on Capitol Hill and could be the difference in the elected leaders we put into office to help join us in defending the interests of Indian country and protecting tribal sovereignty.

Second, It is up to us to cast our vote on behalf of the best interests of our Indian people as it relates to critical issues such as quality education, adequate health care, the right to govern our own lands and to protect our people as citizens of sovereign nations. Most importantly, when leaders are elected who respect and defend these rights, they are honoring this Nation's commitment to Indian country.

It is no secret that legislators respond to numbers and if we turn out in record numbers again on Election Day, your voice will be that much stronger on Capitol Hill. Our collective electoral power can help bring the improvements we seek for our communities. Public policy can be influenced by your vote and can be the catalyst in helping us improve the lives of our people.

Some will say that my sole vote will not make a difference, or, I have heard many people say that what happens in Washington, D.C. has no impact on their daily lives. This could not be further from the truth. Most recently, we have seen great advancements for Indian country with issues such as the passing the Tribal Law and Order Act, the reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Bill, protecting Tribal Health Care plans, and providing for Tribal Government Bond authorization. These are federal initiatives that go far in improving the lives of those living in Indian Country. Congress would not have approved these plans if they thought Indian Country would not vote.

The National Indian Gaming Association continues to work hard on behalf on Indian Country as an advocacy group regarding the legislative issues that impact Indian gaming. Fulfilling our mission at NIGA – which is advancing the lives of Indian people, economically, socially and politically continues to be critical. One important factor towards the success of NIGA carrying out our mission is aided by the fact that we can point to high Indian country voter turnout. Your vote empowers this mission. Through Indian gaming, tribal communities have taken advantage of the opportunities to rebuild our communities and diversity and revitalize our economies and build upon the essential government services provided to our people.

As you prepare to take your place at the polls, remember those who have sacrificed to ensure Native Americans are able to vote. Their sacrifice has helped energize the Native vote throughout Indian country and increased our Native presence throughout all levels of government.

Let us all make our voices heard tomorrow as we continue to make democracy work for us. Our right to vote is as sacred as anything we do this year and will mean nothing if we don't show up at the polls.

Thank you.

Ernie Stevens, Jr. Chairman
National Indian Gaming Association

About the National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA) - The National Indian Gaming Association is a nonprofit trade association comprised of 184 American Indian Nations and other nonvoting associate member. The mission of NIGA is to advance the lives of Indian people – economically, socially and politically. NIGA operates as a clearinghouse and educational legislative and public policy resources for tribes, policymakers and the public on Indian gaming issues and tribal community development. For more information, visit www.indiangaming.org.