



National Indian Education Association

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NIEA RESOLUTION #05-02

Title: Support Reauthorization of Provisions Set to Expire in the Voting Rights Act

WHEREAS, the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) was established in 1969 for the purpose of advocating, planning, and promoting the unique and special educational needs of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; and

WHEREAS, NIEA as the largest national Indian organization of American Indians, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian educators, administrators, parents, and students in the United States, provides a forum to discuss and act upon issues affecting the education of Indian and Native people; and

WHEREAS, through its unique relationship with Indian nations and tribes, the federal government has established programs and resources to meet the educational needs of American Indians, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiians, residing on and off their reserved or non-reserved homelands; and

WHEREAS, while the Indian Citizenship Act gave Native Americans the right to vote in 1924, state law determined who could actually vote, which effectively excluded many Native Americans from political participation for decades; and

WHEREAS, the Voting Rights Act was enacted to remove barriers to political participation and prohibit the denial of the right to vote on account of race or color and as a result, the Voting Rights Act has guaranteed millions of Americans the equal opportunity to participate in the political process and is considered one of the most successful civil rights laws ever enacted by Congress; and

WHEREAS, while much progress has been made in the area of voting rights, significant hurdles to securing voting rights for still remain as documented by a recent court case in South Dakota detailing three decades of systematic voting rights abuses against Native Americans; and

WHEREAS, while most of the Voting Rights Act is permanent, some provisions are set to expire in 2007, including: a requirement that states with a documented history of discriminatory voting practices obtain approval from federal officials before they change election laws; provisions that guarantee access to bilingual election materials for citizens with limited English proficiency; and the authority to send federal examiners and observers to monitor elections in order to prevent efforts to intimidate minority voters at the polls.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Indian Education Association, in light of the history of discrimination that minorities have experienced when voting, and the proven effectiveness of the Voting Rights Act, encourages Congress to:

1. Re-enact the Section 5 pre-clearance requirements for 25 years, consistent with the time period adopted with the 1982 extension. These provisions directly impact nine states (South Dakota, Arizona, California, New York, Florida, Michigan, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas) with a documented history of discriminatory voting practices and local jurisdictions in seven others by requiring them to submit planned changes in their election laws or procedures to the U.S. Department of Justice or the District Court in Washington, D.C. for pre-approval.
2. Renew Section 203 for 25 years so that new citizens and other Americans who are limited in their ability to speak English can continue to receive assistance when voting. Of the 466 local jurisdictions impacted by this provision, 102 jurisdictions must assist American Indians and Alaska Natives in 18 states. Congress also should modify the formula by which these covered jurisdictions are identified in order to provide more communities with Section 203 assistance.
3. Renew Sections 6 to 9, which authorize the attorney general to appoint election monitors and poll watchers to ensure voters are free from harassment, intimidation, or other illegal activity at the polls on Election Day.

Submitted by: NIEA Board of Directors

CERTIFICATION

I do hereby certify that the following resolution was dully considered and passed by the NIEA Board of Directors at its October 10, 2005 meeting in Denver, Colorado at which a quorum was present.

Ryan Wilson

Ryan Wilson, President (2005-06)
National Indian Education Association