

Janet Napolitano
Governor

Office of the Governor

*** ARIZONA NATIVE AMERICAN RIGHT TO VOTE DAY ***

WHEREAS, Native American people have lived in what is now Arizona since time immemorial and today, 22 federally recognized Tribes, Nations, Communities and Pueblo call Arizona home; and

WHEREAS, although today we recognize that the members of these tribes are citizens of their respective tribal nations, citizens of Arizona, and citizens of the United States of America, such was not always the case; and

WHEREAS, despite the fact that before World War I, Native Americans who lived on reservations in Arizona were not considered citizens of the United States and were thus exempt from the draft, more than 8,000 Native Americans served in the United States armed forces during World War I, some giving their lives in the defense of their homes and our freedom; and

WHEREAS, in response to these valuable contributions, and with the advocacy of Native American leaders such as Dr. Carlos Montezuma, a Yavapai man, the United States Congress passed the Indian Citizenship Act in 1924, which guaranteed certain citizenship rights to Native Americans, but did not guarantee the right to vote in Arizona elections; and

WHEREAS, Peter Porter, a member of the Gila River Indian Community, brought suit seeking to secure voting rights for Native Americans in Arizona, but was rebuffed by the Arizona Supreme Court; and

WHEREAS, during World War II, Congress passed the Nationality Act of 1940, reaffirming the citizenship of Native Americans, and inspiring more than 25,000 Native Americans to serve in the military, with some, like Ira Hayes of the Gila River Indian Community, becoming national heroes; and

WHEREAS, when these soldiers returned home and were once again denied many of the freedoms they fought to preserve, two Yavapai men, Frank Harrison and Harry Austin, with the help of Arizona Congressman Richard Harless and Lemuel and Ben Mathews, won a landmark Arizona Supreme Court case confirming the rights of Native Americans to vote because "in a democracy, suffrage is the most basic civil right" and the denial of that right "does violence to the principles of freedom and equality;" and

WHEREAS, although Arizona law now recognizes the right of Native American citizens of Arizona to vote in State elections, it remains vital that we work together to ensure that every eligible voter is able to exercise this most fundamental right;

NOW, THEREFORE, I Janet Napolitano, Governor of the State of Arizona, do hereby proclaim the day of July 15, 2007 as

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IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of the State of Arizona

Janet Napolitano
GOVERNOR

DONE at the Capitol in Phoenix on this twenty-sixth day of June in the year Two Thousand and Seven and of the Independence of the United States of America the Two Hundred and Thirty-first.

ATTEST:

Janice K. Brewer
Secretary of State

