



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Navajo Nation files second lawsuit against Apache County to protect Navajo voting rights

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Tuesday, the Navajo Nation Department of Justice filed a second lawsuit against Apache County after learning about delays in processing early ballots for the 2024 general election.

“This is not the first time we’ve seen these kinds of issues in Apache County, and sadly, it’s been an ongoing pattern of disenfranchisement in previous elections,” said Speaker Crystalyne Curley. “The Navajo Nation will continue to fight for our voters, holding Apache County accountable until every Navajo voice is heard and every vote is counted.”

The first lawsuit, filed on Election Day, aimed to give Navajo voters in Apache County two extra hours to vote after ballot printers failed at several polling locations. This second suit seeks to extend the time for voters to fix inconsistent signatures on their early ballots.

Voters had until 5 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 10, to correct signatures, but the Navajo Nation Department of Justice learned on Nov. 9 that Apache County had paused early ballot processing from Nov. 6 to Nov. 8. Additionally, 143 Navajo voters had ballots with signature issues that needed to be addressed. As of 5:20 p.m. on Nov. 9, Apache County still had 900 early ballots to process.

With only 48 hours to notify these voters and allow them to fix their ballots, many faced barriers like poor cell service, limited internet access, and long travel distances to the Apache County Recorder’s Office in St. Johns. The tight deadline made it difficult for voters to get proper notice and sufficient time to act.

“The Navajo people’s voice and vote is powerful,” said Council Delegate Carl R. Slater, who volunteered as a poll observer in Apache County during the General Election. “We have the power to influence local, state and national elections. When our voices are silenced through delays or disenfranchisement, it undermines not just our tribe, but the strength of the Native vote as a whole and we will not stand for it.”

In addition to the delays, many Navajo voters faced difficulties reaching the Recorder’s Office during the election. By mid-afternoon on Nov. 9, the Arizona Secretary of State’s website still showed that their ballots had not been received by Apache County, prompting numerous calls to confirm that their votes were counted.

While volunteer outreach on Nov. 10 helped 21 voters correct their ballots, about 40 voters reported not being notified about their signature issues.

To give Navajo voters more time to fix their inconsistent signatures, the Navajo Nation filed an amicus brief on Sunday, Nov. 10, in support of a case brought by the ACLU and the League of United Latin American Citizens. The case, filed in the Arizona Supreme Court, sought to extend the deadline for curing early ballots beyond Nov. 10, as over 250,000 ballots statewide had not been processed by Nov. 8. However, the Arizona Supreme Court declined to extend the deadline.

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