New Opportunities and Threats to Native American Voting Power discussed with Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr.

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PHOTO: Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. as a guest speaker on the Native America Calling radio show in Albuquerque, N.M.

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Yesterday, Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. of the 24th Navajo Nation Council joined host and former Miss Alaska USA, Alyssa London, on the Native America Calling radio show to discuss the voting power of tribal communities around the country. Studies show that majority Native populated areas are being targeted by state legislatures when redrawing boundaries to lessen the power of the Indigenous vote.

In 2020, Navajo voters were instrumental for Democrats to receive Arizona's 11 Electoral College votes and its U.S. Senate seat. This includes the last presidential race where high turnout by Native voters flipped Arizona, Georgia, and Nevada in favor of President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris.

According to data from the Arizona Democratic Party, precincts saw a 40 percent to 60 percent increase in participation on the Navajo Nation.

"Our Native American people must have equal opportunity to fairly participate in all elections," said Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. "Tachee/Blue Gap, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tselani/Cottonwood, Low Mountain). "Precinct voting boundaries need to be clearly defined so there are no questions

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on where our Navajo people cast their ballots on Election Day. We continue to advocate to state legislatures to respect the trust responsibility and work with our Sovereign Nations by complying with the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The largest tribal nation in the United States will protect the voting rights of our Indigenous people - from Alaska, to Hawaii, Florida, California, and to New Mexico."

Tribal leaders around the country from North Dakota, Montana, and the southwest are urging lawmakers not to weaken Native voting power as legislative and congressional district lines are being drawn after months of public hearings.

Last week, Speaker Seth Damon, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, and Delegate Begay provided public testimony before the Arizona Independent Redistricting Commission about the importance of strengthening Native American voting rights, improving access to voting, and supporting redistricting maps proposed by the Navajo Nation.

"Our redistricting maps must be fair and truly represent the best interest of the Navajo Nation. We will protect the power of the Navajo vote across the country and hold state leaders accountable. Choosing leaders who share the same core values and beliefs as our people is important to a fair election process. Every independent redistricting commission must take into serious consideration our government-to-government relationship and respect our sovereignty as self-governing nations," said Speaker Seth Damon (Bááhaalí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tséyatoh).

Guests on the radio show included attorney Jacqueline De Leon (Isleta Pueblo) for the Native American Rights Fund, creator Jaylyn Suppah (Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs) of Papalaxsimisha, and Skokomish Indian Tribal Council Executive Secretary Bobbi Blacketer.

Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr, added, "The Council commends the work of the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission for leading the charge by fiercely advocating for the Navajo vote. We must maintain the Native American voting age population within the 62-percentage plus range for all districts and ensure our communities are treated fairly under the law."

Th Native America Calling interview can be accessed at https://nativeamericacalling.com/tuesday-december-7-2021-new-opportunities-and-threats-for-native-voting-power/

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