



## OFFICE OF NAVAJO NATION HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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### **Immediate Release:**

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Public hearing on redistricting conceptual plans bears concerns on racial division in the County.

**St. Michael's, Navajo Nation (ARIZ)** – Since 2011, the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission (“Commission”) has been working to secure the voting rights of Navajo Citizens in State and Federal elections, in Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. There are strong concerns with the state of Navajo voting rights in San Juan County Utah (“County”). In the redistricting case of *Navajo Nation vs. San Juan County*, Judge Robert J. Shelby made the decision that the County Commission and School Board election districts are unconstitutional. The County was given the opportunity to draw new, lawful redistricting plans, according to the United States Constitution and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, but the County chose to create maps that are based on racial quotas in both the School Board and County Commission plans.

With numerous attempts to resolve the unconstitutional redistricting plans created by the County, Judge Shelby appointed, Special Master Dr. Bernard Grofman, PhD, to develop constitutional redistricting maps for County Commission and school board. Dr. Grofman designed three conceptual County Commission maps and two conceptual School Board maps.

On November 16, 2017, Judge Shelby and Dr. Grofman conducted public hearings at Monticello, and Bluff, UT. The main goal for the public hearings was to gain insight from the public on the conceptual maps for redrawing County Commission and School Board districts. The public was invited to provide comments on the conceptual maps.

During the public hearing there was high opposition against Dr. Grofman's conceptual maps that followed the guidelines outlined in the Voting Rights Act and the U.S. constitution. During the public comment section remarks were made that questioned the integrity of Navajo citizens living in the County such as, but not limited to, Navajo's don't know how to pay property taxes. Navajo voters are a protected class according the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

“The 1965 voting rights act was established to protect and enhance minority voting rights. This provides minority votes to be enhanced and not regress the voting power for minorities by cracking the voting strength, packing into single district” said Leonard Gorman, Executive Director of the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission. Gorman further states “We need to secure Native American voting strength in the County that aligns with the Voting Rights Act.” Gorman reminded the County, they remain under Section 203 of the voting rights act and cannot not imbue legal challenges that disfranchise Navajo voters under the section.

The two conceptual plans the Commission select are County Commission plan C, with minor adjustment, and School Board plan 2. Both plans are constitutional, follow the traditional redistricting. For more information contact the Navajo Nation Human Right Commission at 928-871-7436 or visit [www.nnhrc.navajo-nsn.gov](http://www.nnhrc.navajo-nsn.gov).

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