



## OFFICE OF NAVAJO NATION HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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### **For Immediate Release:**

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### **The Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission supports the proposed New Mexico Redistricting Act**

**St. Michaels, Navajo Nation (AZ)** – The Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission (“Commission”) supports the Redistricting Act (Senate Bill 199 and House Bill 211), which is sponsored by State Representatives Rebecca Dow, Kelly K. Fajardo, Joy Garratt, Natalie Figueroa and Georgene Louis; and State Senators Gerald Ortiz y Pino and Mark Moores.

The proposed legislation would create a new act and establish a state redistricting commission. The redistricting commission will consist of seven members. The seven members would be appointed by state entities and be responsible for developing three to five redistricting plans for New Mexico’s congressional districts, the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the Public Education Commission.

The proposed legislation is supported and sponsored by Democrats and Republicans. Currently, the proposed legislation is held up in the judiciary and rules committee of both chambers. In order for the proposed legislation to move forward, it needs public support. If enacted, the state redistricting commission would rely on the public input when redistricting. The redistricting commission will conduct a total of twelve (12) public hearings. Six (6) meetings must be “public meetings” to collect information and six (6) meetings must be “public rule hearings” for the purpose of adopting district plans.

In 2011, the Commission was involved in creating districts that favor Navajo citizens within the States of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. There is a vast difference between Arizona and New Mexico when developing redistricting plans. In Arizona, the state starts from scratch by clearing the previous district plans and starts anew with the official census count. In addition, Arizona is redistricted by a state redistricting commission with public input. Whereas, the redistricting plans for New Mexico are done by the state legislatures with the emphasis to maintain the new election districts as close to the previous ones.

Leonard Gorman, Executive Director of the Commission, said, “The Navajo Human Rights Office was enlisted in becoming a member of the New Mexico Redistricting Task Force. There were two important points presented by the office to the task force: 1) instead of using precinct boundaries to draw districts, a new law should be enacted to use the census blocks; and 2) the new election districts should be drawn without accounting for the incumbent residences.”

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In 2020, the Commission became involved with the New Mexico Redistricting Task Force which helped development key provisions in the proposed Redistricting Act. Supporting the act will benefit New Mexico in future redistricting plans. The Commission is requesting these bills to be scheduled for a committee hearing and allow for public comments from New Mexico residents. For more information contact the Commission at 928-871-7436.

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