



INDIAN COUNTRY TODAY

Digital. Indigenous. News.

E-Weekly Newsletter - October 29, 2020



Indian Country's COVID-19 syllabus

Data, story summaries, lists of closures, resources
(As of Oct. 29, 2020 - IHS numbers as of Oct. 27, 2020)

COVID-19 Tracker in the United States

Total cases: 8,752,794

Total deaths: 225,985

Jurisdictions reporting cases: 54

(50 states, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and US Virgin Islands)

Total cases in the Indian Health System: 68,419

Total deaths in the Indian Health System: 846

(Confirmed by tribes, the Indian Health Service, state public health agencies or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

*** Report COVID-19 cases in your tribe on this [Google Form](#) ***

[Click here for stories that have been posted by Indian Country Today.](#)

Inside this week's
issue of
Indian Country Today

#Coronavirus
Check out Indian
Country Today's
coverage of COVID-19

#NativeVote20
Check out how the
Native vote in swing
states can have impact

#NativeVote20
Read more profiles of
various Native
candidates running
across the U.S.

Native vote plays powerful role, especially in swing states

By Mary Annette Pember

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Voting advocates predict Native voters will come out in force despite challenges
#NativeVote20

Native American and Alaska Native voters have the power to determine the next president.

“Had Native voters turned out in 2016, we would likely have had a very different outcome in the presidential election,” said OJ Semans, executive director of Four Directions Inc., a Native American voting rights advocacy organization. Semans is a member of the Rosebud Sioux tribe.

Native voters stand to play a crucial role in the 2020 election, especially in swing states where

they make up significant portions of eligible voters. States in which two major parties have similar levels of support and high numbers of electoral votes are also home to large Native populations.

The approximately 3.7 million Natives and Alaska Natives of voting age are represented in this election’s crucial swing states.

Swing states and percentage of eligible Native voters:

Arizona – 5.6 percent; Colorado – 2.5 percent; Michigan – 1.4 percent; Minnesota – 1.8 percent; Nevada – 2.5 percent; North Carolina – 2.1 percent; and Wisconsin – 1.5 percent.

At first glance, it might appear that the numbers are insignificant; however, if President Donald Trump’s narrow margin of victory in several states during the 2016 presidential election is any indication, the Native vote stands to play an important role in this election.

“Trump won the state during the 2016 election by 0.7 percent. We could have very well have swung that election,” said Guy Reiter of Menikanaehken Inc., a grassroots organization based on the Menominee reservation in northeast Wisconsin. In addition to working to revitalize its community, Menikanaehken Inc. is working to increase voter engagement and registration.

In the 2016 presidential election, however, only 1.8 million Native voters turned out, about half of the eligible voters. ([Read more here](#))



President Donald Trump, left, points towards Democratic presidential candidate former Vice President Joe Biden, right, during the second and final presidential debate Thursday at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee. (AP Photo/Patrick Semansky)

Lawmakers demand answers in birthing center closure

By Dalton Walker

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Eight of Arizona's 11 congressional delegates asked for additional information about the shutdown and what the Indian Health Service is doing to help affected patients

A bipartisan group of Arizona lawmakers is demanding answers from the leader of the Indian Health Service after one of its largest hospitals stopped offering birthing services.

The Phoenix Indian Medical Center, which operates under the federal agency, shut down its inpatient obstetrics services Aug. 26. The closure was sudden and without public notice, leaving dozens of moms scrambling to find birthing services elsewhere.



This Oct. 22 photo shows the Phoenix Indian Medical Center (Photo by Dalton Walker, Indian Country Today)

On Friday, after Indian Country Today [reported on the shutdown](#), the hospital posted on its [Facebook page](#) that its delivery services were put on hold. It also updated its website to say obstetrical services are being diverted to alternate care facilities.

In an Oct. 21 [letter](#) to Indian Health Service Director Michael Weahkee, eight of Arizona's 11 congressional delegates asked for additional information about the closure and what the Indian Health Service is providing for affected patients.

"In light of the significant impact this could have on Native American families in our state and throughout the region, we are requesting further information about the closure and when Indian Health Service (HIS) expects to resume these services at PIMC or an alternative facility," the letter said.

The lawmakers noted they were especially concerned with ensuring that affected Native mothers receive "sufficient outreach and support from IHS, and experience affordable and high-quality continuity of care."

Indian Health Service officials briefed the Arizona delegation in September of the closure, according to the letter.

[Read more here](#)



JOE BIDEN and **KAMALA HARRIS** will make far-reaching investments to **BUILD BACK BETTER** across Indian Country in *health care, education, economic opportunities* and *community development*.

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We need leaders who will stand up for
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The Biden-Harris Plan for Tribal Nations will:

- Dramatically boost funding for Indian Health Service and provide affordable, quality health care
- Place more tribal land into trust and address climate change
- Work to preserve our culture
- Ensure Native communities are safer and tackle the crisis of violence against Native women, children and the elderly
- Commemorate Native veterans
- Ensure free access to COVID-19 testing, treatment, and vaccines for everyone

MAKE A PLAN TO VOTE EARLY

By Nov 3rd, vote for

JOE BIDEN AND KAMALA HARRIS

TO FIND OUT WHERE AND HOW YOU CAN VOTE, VISIT [IWILLVOTE.COM](https://www.iwillvote.com)

PAID FOR BY BIDEN FOR PRESIDENT

US Rep. Deb Haaland seeks a second term

By Aliyah Chavez

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'There are young girls right now who don't know what it's like to not have a Native woman in Congress' #NativeVote20

Democratic Rep. Deb Haaland of New Mexico says her first term in Congress has been nothing short of eventful after being sworn in during a government shutdown, voting in a presidential impeachment and working through a global pandemic.

Haaland, Laguna and Jemez Pueblo, is seeking reelection for a second term representing New Mexico's 1st Congressional District. On Nov. 3, she faces Republican opponent Michelle Garcia-Holmes, a former police detective and administrator for the state attorney general's office.



New Mexico Rep. Deb Haaland, Laguna Pueblo, seeks a second term in Congress. (Photo by Aliyah Chavez, Indian Country Today)

In 2018, Haaland alongside Kansas Rep. Sharice Davids, Ho-Chunk, made history as the first Native American women elected to Congress. Since then, Haaland says she's felt proud to work on key legislation impacting Indian Country, including bills addressing the missing and murdered Indigenous women crisis.

The Not Invisible Act and Savanna's Act were signed into law by President Donald J. Trump on Oct. 10. Both bills aid for better data collection, coordination and increased resources.

The Not Invisible Act was co-sponsored by Haaland and Davids, as well as two other Native American representatives, both Republicans, from Oklahoma: Tom Cole, Chickasaw, and Markwayne Mullin, Cherokee. It is believed to be the first bill in history to be introduced and passed by four members of federally recognized tribes.

Haaland told Indian Country Today that despite their different political affiliations, all four Native congressional members have been integral in passing legislation.

"The four of us have formed a strong bond. We know that we can push Indian issues," Haaland said. "I'm really happy to have the opportunity to serve with Tom Cole, especially because he's a veteran and he's held the fort down in Indian Country for a lot of years." ([Read more here](#))

ELECTION DAY IS TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3RD!

For our families, for our
communities, for our future
generations – **share
your voice this election.**

OUR VOTE. OUR VOICE



National
Congress of
American
Indians



Expecting too much, too soon: 'Everyone thinks COVID-19 will go away with a vaccine'

By Liz Szabo
JoNel Aleccia

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Researchers debated how rigorously to test COVID-19 vaccines at a Thursday public meeting of the Food and Drug Administration advisory committee on vaccines

The White House and many Americans have pinned their hopes for defeating the COVID-19 pandemic on a vaccine being developed at “warp speed.” But some scientific experts warn they’re all expecting too much, too soon.

“Everyone thinks COVID-19 will go away with a vaccine,” said Dr. William Haseltine, chair and president of Access Health International, a foundation that advocates for affordable care.



The illustration: Syringe and Protective face masks on red background, hygiene for viral and respiratory infections of coronavirus by focusonmore.com and is licensed under Creative Commons.

Ongoing clinical trials are primarily designed to show whether COVID-19 vaccines prevent any symptoms of the disease – which could be as minor as a sore throat or cough. But the trials, which will study 30,000 to 60,000 volunteers, will be too short in duration and too small in size to prove that the vaccines will prevent what people fear most – being hospitalized or dying – by the time the first vaccine makers file for emergency authorization, expected to occur later this year, Haseltine said.

The United States should hold out for an optimal vaccine, with more proven capabilities, Haseltine argued. Others say the crushing toll of the pandemic – which has killed at least 225,000 Americans – demands that the country accept the best vaccine it can achieve within the next few months, even if significant questions remain after its release.

“There’s a tension between getting every piece of information and getting a vaccine [out] in time to save lives,” said Dr. William Schaffner, a professor of preventive medicine and health policy at the Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

“Would we like to know if the vaccine reduces illness or mortality? Of course,” said Dr. Peter Lurie, a former FDA official and the current president of the Center for Science in the Public Interest. “But there is a real time pressure. This is a pandemic. It’s explosive.”

Researchers debated how rigorously to test COVID-19 vaccines at a Thursday public meeting of the Food and Drug Administration advisory committee on vaccines. ([Read more here](#))

Cherokee candidates square off in US House race

By Eddie Chuculate

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Corrected: Republican U.S. Rep. Markwayne Mullin of Oklahoma is seeking a fifth term.

#NativeVote20

As one of only four Native Americans out of 535 members of Congress, Oklahoma Republican Markwayne Mullin, Cherokee, has been active in American Indian-related legislation and seeks to continue that work for another two-year term.

Standing in his way in the 2nd Congressional District on Nov. 3 are 45-year-old Democrat Danyell Lanier, Cherokee, and Libertarian Richie Castaldo, 38.

Mullin, 43, is seeking a fifth straight term, having been first elected in 2012 after the retirement of longtime popular Democrat Dan Boren.



U.S. Rep. Markwayne Mullin, Cherokee (Photo courtesy of @MullinForCongress via Facebook)

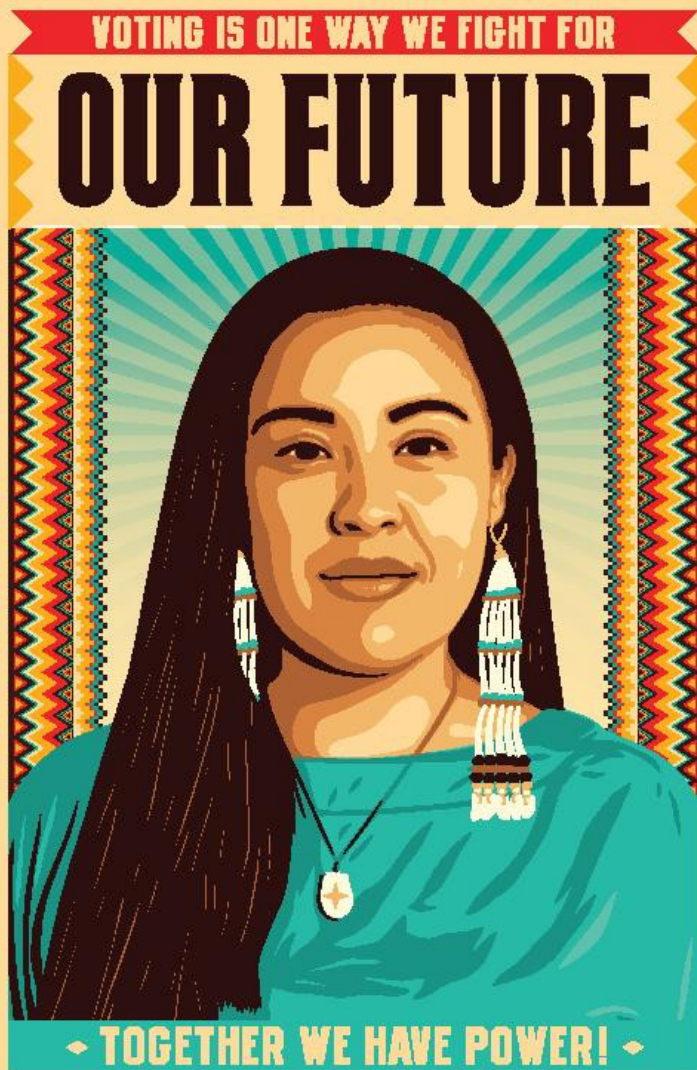
Since then, the Stilwell, Oklahoma, native and Cherokee Nation citizen has swamped three straight opponents in the district, which encompasses most of eastern Oklahoma and is 17 percent Native.

Along with the three other Natives in Congress — Democrats Deb Haaland, Laguna Pueblo, of New Mexico and Sharice Davids, Ho-Chunk, of Kansas, and Republican Tom Cole, Chickasaw, also of Oklahoma — Mullin was an original co-sponsor of Savanna's Act, which was signed into law by President Donald Trump on Oct. 10 and requires federal, state, tribal and local law enforcement agencies to update and create protocols to address missing or murdered Native Americans.

Likewise, he was an original co-sponsor of the companion **Not Invisible Act**, passed into law on the same day, which requires the Interior Department to designate an official within the Bureau of Indian Affairs to coordinate prevention efforts, grants and programs related to missing Indians and the murder and human trafficking of Indians.

"As a member of the Cherokee Nation, I take great pride in the role Native Americans have played throughout history," Mullin states on his website.

[Read more here](#)



OUR VOTE IS A HARD-FOUGHT RIGHT.

It hasn't always been valued, and we didn't choose this system of government. But our vote creates power for Indian country. It's one way we care for our elders, defend indigenous women and girls, protect tribal sovereignty and fight to improve our mental health.

Go to NativesVote2020.com for more info.



California tribes oppose proposed water tunnel

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Members of the Hoopa Valley High School Water Protectors Club hold a banner at a March 2 rally against the delta tunnel project in Redding, California. (Photo by Dan Bacher)

By Nanette Deetz

'This project threatens our birds, plants, animals, fish, sacred sites and burial sites'

In early March, just weeks before California shut down due to COVID-19, more than 200 tribal citizens, environmentalists and others gathered in the city of Redding to protest a proposed massive water tunnel in the state.

Members of the Yurok, Hoopa Valley, Karuk, Pit River, Winnemem Wintu, Pomo and Miwok nations held an outdoor rally before speaking at a meeting on the Delta Tunnel Conveyance project, saying it would destroy water quality and devastate the state's salmon population and other important fish species in the San Joaquin Delta estuary.

Gov. Gavin Newsom has since released his final "Water Resilience Plan" for California, which includes the underground tunnel, a multibillion-dollar project that would pump billions of gallons of water from the San Joaquin Delta to the southern part of the state. It also includes a proposed Sites Reservoir dam project in Northern California.

[Read more here](#)

Montana setting the example

By Kolby KickingWoman

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State legislative body reflects population demographics, likely the largest number of Native legislators in the country
#NativeVote20

Representation matters.

It's a mantra that's always been true and a phrase that has been increasingly stated in recent years. From Hollywood to professional sports head coaching positions to public offices, people of color are creating spaces for themselves in institutions they haven't previously been represented in.



Montana state Capitol (Indian Country Today photo)

Consider 2018, when more Natives ran for public office at all levels than in any prior year. Those midterm elections, Reps. Deb Haaland, Laguna and Jemez Pueblo, and Sharice Davids, Ho-Chunk, "broke the glass ceiling" when they became the first two Native women elected to Congress.

Native people make up roughly 2 percent of the U.S. population and equal representation in Congress would be 11 members. Currently there are four in Congress: Haaland and Davids, plus Oklahoma Reps. Tom Cole, Chickasaw, and Markwayne Mullin, Cherokee.

Perhaps Congress could learn a lesson from Montana, where the number of tribal citizens in the state legislature equals the percentage of Natives residing in the state. Shane Morigeau, Salish and Kootenai, recently **told Indian Country Today** that representation ensures Native voices are heard on issues that affect tribal communities.

Home to eight federally recognized tribes, Natives are roughly 7 percent of the state's population and are the largest minority group in the state.

"I think when you have that representation, a lot of the critical issues impacting our communities," Morigeau said of the legislature's makeup. "I mean, I always look at it when all of our communities are doing better, Montana is doing better."

[Read more here](#)

Watch the Indian Country Today newscast!

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All bodies have breast tissue

Melissa Buffalo talks about her foundation's efforts to raise visibility during breast cancer awareness month. And national correspondent Dalton Walker joins us with an update on the closing of Phoenix Indian Medical Center's OB-GYN clinic.

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Native TV commercials: The good shot

By Mark Trahant

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Native candidates use videos to define their story #NativeVote20

There was a time when TV commercials defined politics. And that's still true in many states. Turn on any commercial television station in a competitive race, and the ads are pretty much nonstop.

Do commercials work? Historically, yes. A national conservative group spent millions in 1982 to defeat Montana Democrat John

Melcher. The ads packed this punch: Melcher was "too liberal for Montana."

Melcher, a veterinarian, countered with a commercial that featured suspicious types carrying briefcases stuffed with dollars coming into Montana and cows talking about how these city-slickers were bad-mouthing Doc Melcher. "Montanans aren't buying it, especially those who know bull when they hear it," said an announcer, adding that the culprits "had been stepping in what they're trying to sell."

Melcher won by 13 points.

These days the idea of a "commercial" is quite different. On television they are still the 30-second spots that define a candidate (or their opponent). But nearly all national candidates can produce video spots that are longer, a couple of minutes or more, and tell a lot more of their story. These are stories shared for free on social media.

This election nearly 5 million ads have aired in federal races (House, Senate and president) on broadcast and national cable television since January of 2019, according to the Wesleyan Media Project, which tracks ad spending. "That volume is more than twice the volume of ad airings in the 2012 and 2016 presidential election cycles — and well above the previously record-setting midterm election ad volumes in 2018."

Paulette Jordan, Coeur d'Alene, is running for the U.S. Senate in Idaho. Her most recent television ad is another telling of the Western narrative that was so effective for Melcher.

She talks about growing up in DeSmet. "It's like a lot of Idaho towns, where good people have been left behind by the elites who control politics," she says. ([Read more and watch some commercials here](#))



Paulette Jordan's TV spot "Good Shot." Screenshot from campaign video.

Thanks For Reading!

President

Karen Lincoln Michel, Ho-Chunk
karenmichel@indiancountrytoday.com
Twitter [@kmichel](https://twitter.com/kmichel)

Executive Producer

Patty Talahongva, Hopi
ptalahongva@indiancountrytoday.com
Twitter [@WiteSpider](https://twitter.com/WiteSpider)

Deputy Managing Editor

Jourdan Bennett-Begaye, Dine'
jbennett-begaye@indiancountrytoday.com
Twitter [@JourdanBB](https://twitter.com/JourdanBB)

Reporter / Producer

Kolby KickingWoman, Blackfeet/Gros Ventre
kkickingwoman@indiancountrytoday.com
Twitter [@KDKW_406](https://twitter.com/KDKW_406)

Creative Director

Tomás Amaya, A:shiwi, Rarámuri, Yoeme
tomas@indiancountrytoday.com
Twitter [@TomasKarmelo](https://twitter.com/TomasKarmelo)

Director of Business Development

Sky Vasquez, Bishop Paiute Tribe
svasquez@indiancountrytoday.com
Twitter [@BrightsideofRez](https://twitter.com/BrightsideofRez)

Indian Country Today

Walter Cronkite School of Journalism
and Mass Communications
555 N Central Ave.
Phoenix, AZ 85004

Editor

Mark Trahant, Shoshone Bannock
mtrahant@indiancountrytoday.com
Twitter [@TrahanReports](https://twitter.com/TrahanReports)

Associate Editor / Opinions

Vincent Schilling, Akwesasne Mohawk
vschilling@indiancountrytoday.com
Twitter [@VinceSchilling](https://twitter.com/VinceSchilling)

Reporter / Producer

Aliyah Chavez, Kewa Pueblo
achavez@indiancountrytoday.com
Twitter [@AliyahJChavez](https://twitter.com/AliyahJChavez)

News Releases

pressrelease@indiancountrytoday.com
Twitter [@ICTOpinion](https://twitter.com/ICTOpinion)

National Correspondent

Joaclin Estus, Tlingit
jestus@indiancountrytoday.com
Twitter [@estus_m](https://twitter.com/estus_m)

National Correspondent

Dalton Walker, Red Lake Anishinaabe
dwalker@indiancountrytoday.com
Twitter [@daltonwalker](https://twitter.com/daltonwalker)

To advertise with

Indian Country Today
Contact Heather Donovan
(315) 447-6145

hdonovan@indiancountrytoday.com

Indian Country Today

PO Box 929
Phoenix, Arizona 85001