



Notes from the Chief

What I'm working on for You

Osiyo -

Cherokee Nation has invested time and resources in ensuring our citizens are registered to vote in tribal, state and federal elections. Cherokee Vote launched in 2013 to drive participation in the electoral process. Since its inception, our voter engagement program has registered 5,585 tribal voters and 1,160 state and federal voters.

Those numbers have been even more impressive in the first three months of 2017, as we have registered 700 voters for tribal elections, which is more than the entirety of 2015. These numbers demonstrate that Cherokees are becoming an influential voice in their communities and in our state. It is critical for our citizens to participate in elections, including tribal, municipal, county, state and federal. We continue to raise this conversation because so many people are still unregistered and many who are registered fail to cast their votes.

Our employees and volunteers routinely travel across the 14-county jurisdiction to tribal community meetings and events to register voters, answer questions and speak to the importance of engaging in the political process. We have a Cherokee Vote presence at local nontribal events as well, like the state and county fairs where we talk to Cherokees and non-Cherokees about the importance of voting. Additionally, we have operated a voter registration booth for the past several years at all Cherokee Nation at-large community gatherings across the country. The Cherokee Vote effort is closely associated with the National Congress of American Indians' national Native Vote campaign.

It wasn't until 1924 that Native Americans were recognized as U.S. citizens with the right to vote. That means for 150 years of this nation's history, American Indians had no vote or say in damaging policies. Almost 10 percent of the Oklahoma population are enrolled citizens in one of the state's 38 federally recognized tribal governments. With 350,000 citizens, Cherokee Nation is a powerful voting bloc. When we register and get out the vote, Cherokees and Native people can make a huge difference.

We will continue to provide our citizens with up-to-date information on issues that impact Cherokee Nation. Our hope is that each of our Cherokee citizens recognizes their collective power to influence decisions at all levels of government. It is critical to stay engaged and to exercise your right to vote so that elected officials hear your voice and act to protect tribal sovereignty and honor treaty and trust obligations. I hope sending a message to Cherokee people that voting is important also teaches our children the importance of civic participation. Hopefully, parents will take their children to the polls and voting will be a regular family event and a lifetime habit.

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