

# Navajos Settle Voting Rights Lawsuit

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<http://www.fronterasdesk.org/content/11007/navajos-settle-voting-rights-lawsuit>

Audio: <http://fronterasdesk.org/sites/default/files/Vote022218web.mp3>

A small victory for Native American voting rights this week: Navajos who once worried they'd have to drive hours to cast their ballots in Utah said a new settlement is a step forward.

The Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission filed suit in 2016 over San Juan County's decision to switch to a vote-by-mail system.

The [American Civil Liberties Union Utah](#) legal director John Mejia said the settlement requires tribal accessible polling places and Navajo-language assistance.

"For about a month before any election, San Juan County will be opening three satellite offices on the Navajo Nation, where voters will be able to get in-person voting assistance that would include language assistance," Mejia said.

About 40 percent of the residents in San Juan County speak Navajo, and 18 percent don't speak English well, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Southern Utah's San Juan County officials said they're committed to fair elections and made the changes without going to court, which they say would have been a waste of taxpayer money. They said the 2014 switch to voting by mail increased voter turnout by allowing Navajos who work out of town or go away to college or the military to cast ballots.

Similar legal clashes among tribes have been waged recently in Nevada, Alaska and the Dakotas.