



EQUALITY AT THE BALLOT BOX ALL ACROSS INDIAN COUNTRY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LAWSUIT FILED AGAINST ELKO COUNTY FOR UNEQUAL VOTING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SHOSHONE-PAIUTE TRIBES

The Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation, with litigation resources provided by **Four Directions Native Vote**, on September 16, 2022, filed a lawsuit against Elko County, its County Commissioners, County Clerk, Deputy County Clerks, and Chief Deputy County Clerk because of its refusal to rectify the county's grossly unequal voting opportunities for the 2022 election and future elections.

The overwhelmingly white residents of Elko boast 108 hours of early voting and same-day registration opportunities. On election day itself, Elko residents can vote from 7 am to 7 pm, totaling 120 hours of registration and voting opportunities during the early voting and election day periods

Owyhee is the Shoshone-Paiute Tribe's capital. On the Duck Valley Indian Reservation, Elko County has agreed to provide only 8 hours of early voting and same-day registration—with Zero opportunities for in-person election day voting or registration. Elko County has only agreed to a single location open for 4 hours on two Fridays prior to the election on the Duck Valley Indian Reservation. If a tribal member wants to register to vote or vote outside of those 8 hours, they must travel approximately 200 miles or 3 hours and 34 minutes round trip.

Elko's 15x more hours for voting opportunities compounds with the fact of its prosperity compared to Owyhee. According to the 2020 census, the median household income of Elko County is around \$79,000 compared to \$46,000 in Owyhee.

Nevada's constitution requires the voting process be equally open for minority voters as it is for white voters. If white voters are given easier access to the polls, equal access must be provided to minority voters. Elko County has refused to establish polling sites on the Reservation to correct these plainly unequal circumstances, and the Shoshone-Paiute have sought legal relief as a result.

As noted by the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes' Chairman Brian Mason, "We made the request for in-person voting access in a timely fashion as per the Nevada statute – on the form authorized by



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Nevada's Secretary of State. Elko County refuses to comply with the Constitution and leaves us no recourse other than litigation.”

And, as noted by Four Directions Native Vote Director OJ Semans, “Voting is the backbone of Democracy in America. A fifteen-fold advantage for the residents of Elko compared to the members of the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes on the Duck Valley Indian Reservation cannot – in any court or by anyone – be considered an equal shot at the ballot box.”

Miller Law and Sandven Law are the law firms representing the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes. These law firms also successfully represented the plaintiffs in *Sanchez v Cegavske* in 2016 on a similar equal access lawsuit.

Brian Mason, Tribal Chairman
Shoshone-Paiute Tribes