



Press Relations Training and Talking Points

NCAI GOTV Public Relations Guide

GET OUT THE
NATIVE VOTE
'SKO VOTE DEN!
www.nativevote.org



Overview

This press guide was designed to help Tribal Nations and their citizens, Native Organizations, and Advocates and feel confident in communicating the goals and benefits of the NCAI GOTV effort while maintaining a nonpartisan and inclusive approach. This press guide includes core messages, talking points, dos and don'ts, and tips for handling challenging questions.

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Introduction to Press Training

As Election Day – November 5, 2024 – approaches, it is important for tribal leaders, administrators, and legislators to communicate clearly and consistently with the media about the NCAI GOTV campaign. The last two federal Presidential election cycles have been won and lost by razor-thin margins. With the population of Natives as a proportion of the total voter populations in key battleground states, and with polls showing these states as toss-ups, now more than ever, the Native Vote can be the margin of victory. There are key issues of importance to Native voters that transcend partisanship and ideology. A *Tribal Sovereignty Ticket* and key Federal Indian Policy issues have been identified and are shared on the nativevote.org website. However, the key aspect of successfully sharing a Tribal Sovereignty Ticket platform is ensuring media coverage beyond the history of media sources relegating Native issues to “other” or “something” else. Leveraging the media’s reach early and often can help us achieve our goals of increasing the number of Native voters in the 2024 General Election and will help educate Native voters on the importance of participating in the voting process.

Equally important to engaging with the media is being prepared when you do. This guide will help with that. We are so excited for you to be our “spokes-relatives” out there!

What is Press Training?

We want you to effectively interact with the press with confidence about the NCAI GOTV campaign. Press training equips you with the skills and information to help you interact with the press. This press training guide orients you to key messages, handling difficult questions, and delivering statements that resonate with our priority audience. Being prepared helps you speak clearly, maintain composure, and share the important message of NCAI GOTV.

Tips for Successful Press Interactions

Preparation is key! Your preparation is the foundation of our successful campaign.

Preparation looks like:

- Research
 - Read your training guide
 - Understand who is interviewing you
 - Understand who the interviewer represents, and their audience reach.
 - Understand the context of the interview
- Rehearsal
 - If you receive a question list, practice responses
 - Draft some anticipated questions and practice responding
 - Narrow down your talking points to three to five and practice, practice, practice saying them

- Mock Interviews
 - Grab a relative or friend to simulate an interview
 - Build confidence in how you say your responses
 - Refine your techniques and delivery
- Control the Narrative
 - Send along key talking points of what you'd like to cover
 - Some media will appreciate the preparation, and it narrows their focus
 - Briefly describe the parameters of what you intend to cover
 - Scope out the interview and share any areas off-limits
 - Protect any areas during prep by saying “off the record”

NCAI Native GOTV 2024 Message

Honoring the Past: Preparing for our Future

“The work we do is not ‘D’ for Democrat or ‘R’ for Republican but ‘I’ for Indian.”

– Former NCAI President Jefferson Keel (Chickasaw)

NCAI is interested in coordinating the voting efforts already happening across Indian Country by sharing GOTV toolkits, resources, and financial support to Tribal Nations to ensure active engagement in the upcoming federal elections. Our goal is to excite our fellow American Indian and Alaska Native people (Natives) to vote and to support a “Tribal Sovereignty Ticket” of key Federal Indian policy issues for Tribal Nations and their citizens. Help determine the outcome of the most significant election of our lifetime!

Fast Facts About the NCAI GOTV Campaign:

- NCAI GOTV is a coordinated, intentionally **nonpartisan**, Native voter engagement strategy.
- Actively supporting candidates who support a “Tribal Sovereignty Ticket”.
- Native votes impact local, state, and national political races, and NCAI GOTV wants Native voters represented in the 2024 General Election!
- The campaign seeks to ensure **active** Native voter engagement on November 5, 2024.
- We have the power to shape policy, to defend tribal sovereignty, and to protect the next generation of Native leaders, but only if we gear up, show up, and speak up.
- NCAI is prioritizing the following three steps:
 1. Encourage election participation by driving Native voter awareness and motivating increased participation in this year’s General Election.
 2. Mobilize and engage voters by activating and involving voters in the lead-up to the November 5 general election.
 3. Offer post-election support by providing transitional technical assistance to the newly elected presidential administration, whoever it is.
- It’s our right to be heard. It’s a Native right to vote.
- For more information, go to NativeVote.org.

Interaction with the Press

Why Talk to the Press?

The media can be a powerful tool in public relations. It's not enough to convince the press that an issue or program is valuable or noble; they need to be convinced that our work is newsworthy. We think our NCAI GOTV efforts have good reasons to be covered by the press. Good press relations are built on communication, trust, and cooperation. We want to be sure we supply stories that get covered.

The Election Media Landscape

The changing media landscape in the U.S. has been a driver of polarization. Cable news and social media have contributed to Americans holding some strong political and ideological opinions which are often manifested in partisan platforms. NCAI GOTV is **nonpartisan**, and we want to focus less on divisive partisan issues and more on our positive message elevating issues of importance to Natives. It is good to be aware that the current media landscape is complicated, to say the least, and while party disagreement is an essential part of the political process, there is a lot going on that can distract from opportunities to educate Native voters about registering to vote and making it to the polls. NCAI has found that Native people will prioritize a "Tribal Sovereignty Ticket Platform" above partisanship and local, regional, and national political ideologies.

Media Types and How They Gather/Share Information

Great ways to share the NCAI GOTV message

- **Print Media**
 - Newspapers
 - A reporter will interview you about your story; find the right department
 - For longer stories, be sure to stick to talking points
 - Magazines
 - Longer shelf life
 - Each issue has a theme which is posted on their editorial calendar; make sure your story fits the full publication and its audience—look at past issues for guidance
- **Broadcast Media**
 - Radio
 - Generally, need to contact the producer, not the host
 - If you call in, be prepared to be interviewed on the spot!
 - If scheduled to be interviewed, you can send a press release ahead of the interview—but don't assume they will read it

- Television
 - Rely on quick, succinct stories to feature in their segments
 - Visual interest is important
 - Timing is everything, and video will likely be taken to capture audience attention
- **Shared Media**
 - Podcasts
 - Podcasts are audio or visual episodes connected to a theme
 - There are many Native-focused and voting-focused podcasts
 - These can run longer, so remember your talking points!
- **Social Media**
 - Facebook
 - It's easy to create an interactive Facebook post by linking to your press products and sharing upcoming events
 - Post links to your interview, the host's page, and anyone else involved to pull in a wider audience
 - X (formerly Twitter)
 - Posts are usually linked to other accounts or topics to increase their reach
 - Press products are often shared here to reach a wide audience
 - Instagram
 - This photo-sharing site is great for posting eye-catching content
 - Posts can often take the form of short-form video, which is a great way to highlight key talking points
 - YouTube
 - This video sharing site has become a great interactive platform
 - Many press products are reshared on YouTube for further viewing
 - LinkedIn
 - Best known for networking capabilities
 - Posts should align with your profile or company page messaging

Journalistic Practice

When engaging with media, our NCAI GOTV spokes-relatives should always stay on message and maintain consistency across platforms and interactions. Today's journalistic landscape is fast and complicated and requires you to be informed and flexible. Journalists are often working under tight deadlines. Anything you say could be quoted or used out of context, so communicate clearly and stick to your key talking points. Information spreads quickly these days! Be mindful of how your words might be shared across platforms to avoid any misunderstanding. Don't be intimidated. Practice, practice, practice staying on message.

You may be asked to ‘prep’ for an interview. ALWAYS ASK if what you say is being recorded for the press piece. Sometimes, journalists will tell you, “No need for another call, I’ve got what I need,” in the initial contact. You might think you’re talking casually and setting up the ‘real’ interview, but they’re taking down every word for publication! Recognizing the use of “off the record” can be a helpful tool to share context but hold any conclusions in what you are expressing. However, understand that overusing it may frustrate the interviewer or assigned prep staff.

Journalists may only be looking for soundbites and might only ask one or two questions. Be prepared with your elevator speech to emphasize key and salient points up front and give context afterward. If you have a catching phrase or hook, use it, as that is what will be remembered. For this NCAI GOTV campaign, make sure to begin with, “A Tribal Sovereignty Ticket is...” Everything afterward will be remembered in this context. Be sure you present all the talking points you prepared but be brief and clear, so you aren’t left feeling like you didn’t get to say something important! Journalists may have their own biases or specific angles so be aware of navigating interviews and be prepared for follow-up questions that could shift the conversation away from your talking points. And remember ...

- The microphone is always on!
 - During texts or phone calls when arranging a time to meet
 - In the elevator or car on the way to the interview
 - During small talk pre- or post-interviews
 - At the social gathering after the interview
- Anything and everything you say to a journalist can appear in print. “Off the record” or “on background” is a tricky game to play unless you’re a seasoned public relations professional. Only say what you’re comfortable having shared immediately and broadly!
 - Every journalist handles this differently
 - There are countless examples of unguarded comments or ‘unofficial’ comments making their way into a press piece
 - Editors may pressure journalists to use all information shared with them
 - A journalist can always get another source to confirm something on the record

Timing and Deadlines

To ensure our message gets the coverage it deserves, it is important to understand media timing and deadlines. Media cycles are fast and furious. Don’t miss the moment by rescheduling unless you are not prepared. At the most hectic, journalists might publish their stories within minutes of an interview. Responding quickly and efficiently to media inquiries ensures our message is included and your perspective is represented. It’s also important to know that major news often breaks in the morning, so offering your story early can increase the likelihood of coverage. Consider timing your press release or media

outreach during peak news hours to ensure they aren't lost in the noise. The best way to find out about deadlines is to ask. Also, it's fair to ask, "When might this appear?" and "Do you have a link so I can re-share and circulate?"

Talking Points

For Tribal Legislators

Your role in getting out the Native vote is to advocate for policies that protect voting rights and ensure fair access to the ballot box. As an elected Tribal leader, your voice is most valuable as you speak directly for your Tribal Nation. Your voice matters and will resonate. Your superpower is being a champion for connecting every single Native voter's vote to how laws and policies are decided in our political system. When talking to the press, tell stories of how voting has guided Native and sovereign legislative decisions. Tell stories about how civic engagement in chapter meetings and town halls has influenced elections locally and nationally. Amplify that voting is not just a powerful tool for change but also a Native right!

For Tribal Leaders

Your role in getting out the Native vote is to inspire and mobilize your community to participate in this democratic process. As a Tribal leader, your voice can set the tone for how others see American Indian/ Alaska Native issues. Your superpower is directly influencing voter turnout by connecting with people on a personal level and addressing the specific concerns and barriers they face. Let your community know their voices deserve to be heard and their needs deserve the attention of our elected officials. When talking to the press, your powerful messaging connects back to your community and tells the stories of your community in succinct and impactful ways. Tell stories of how elections impact everyday life for your community. Emphasize your commitment to a sense of civic duty among your relatives and community members.

For Tribal Administrators

Your role in getting out the Native vote is to ensure the voting process is accessible, efficient, and fair for ALL eligible voters. Your superpower is in providing clear, accurate information about voter registration, polling locations, and the voting process. Use your press opportunities to clear any confusion and address obstacles that might get in the way of Native people voting. Your storytelling should focus on how your office is supporting voter participation. Use your time with the press to also encourage early voting and vote-by-mail options (or raise the very serious issues Native voters face with voting

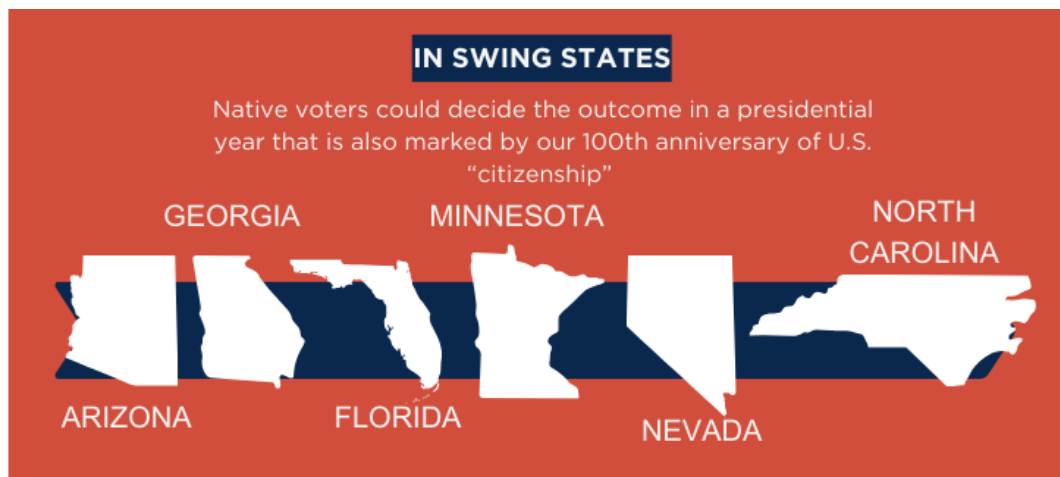


Social media image example

rights). Your role in preparing your Tribal legislator to go live on an interview is critically important. Ensure they have what they need to conduct an on-point and on-message interview.

The Native Vote Matters!

Native voters are a driving force in local, state, and presidential elections!



Map of 2024 Swing States

Historical Talking Points

While the passage of the 1924 Indian Citizenship Act (Snyder Act) recognized Natives as citizens, the Native American right to vote was not guaranteed until the 1964 Civil Rights Act was enacted. To this day, however, Native voter suppression persists.

- In 1970, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld Congress’s authority to ban literacy tests nationwide that were excluding Natives from voting.
 - The 2020 Native American Rights Fund Report, [Obstacles at Every Turn \(PDF, 8 MB, 176 pp\)](#), shows that these historical issues are here today.
- Native American communities have always faced barriers to full democratic participation.
- In August 2024, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Arizona state Republicans’ request to reinstate a state law requiring residents to provide proof of citizenship, including a requirement to complete a form. The 2020 election was razor thin with a huge American Indian voter turnout. Many believe this is a Native vote suppression tactic. Arizona Tribal Nations are mobilizing to ensure their tribal citizens have the documentation and persist in voting. ([Link](#))

- Many states outright barred Natives from voting.
- Today, Native people experience the same transportation-related barriers that our ancestors faced:
 - The nearest polling place can be hundreds of miles away.
 - November is a treacherous travel time with ice and snow in many parts of the U.S.
 - Our Alaska Native relatives often travel by plane to cast their vote.
 - Gas is expensive, and vehicles are not always in working order.
- Restrictive voter ID laws still impact our Native voters:
 - For example, concealed-carry licenses are accepted as voter ID in some states, but tribal-issued IDs or IDs with tribal-designated street addresses are not.
- Historically, to cast a ballot meant Native voters were pressured to abandon tribal membership, land, and culture.
- Newly redrawn legislative and congressional districts clearly weaken the Native vote and representation at the polls.
- The exclusion of Native voters has always been connected to efforts to undermine tribal sovereignty.
- The Native vote decides elections, though!
 - As Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland said during [a virtual town hall](#), "Native American voters essentially shocked the nation."

WHITE

LATINO

BLACK

"SOMETHING ELSE"

ASIAN

**NATIVE AMERICAN
"SKO VOTE DEN!"**

Social media image example

The Tribal Sovereignty Ticket

***NO MATTER HOW NATIVES VOTE :
WHEN WE SHOW UP TO VOTE, WE SHOW OUR POWER***

Key Issues That Matter to Tribal Nations and Their Citizens

- Native voter suppression is about individual rights and our sovereign rights as Tribal Nations!
- Vote to put the right people in office to support us as a people and recognize us as a people.
- Encourage voters to educate themselves and to get all the information they can on all the candidates before casting their vote.
- We need to increase our Native voting power:
 - The lack of tribal representation in Washington needs to change.
 - Voting through state representatives does not address our Native communities' needs.
- We need elected officials who will support our Native right to vote:
 - On-reservation polling locations
 - Early voting sites
 - Satellite offices
 - Designated ballot pickup and collection centers that are accessible to Native voters
 - Language assistance so all our relatives understand their ballots
- We need elected officials who respect Tribal self-determination and self-governance
 - Both are challenged and at stake in federal elections!
- We need elected officials who enhance Tribal political power and autonomy.
- We need elected officials who respect our Native youth and Native elders and their unique needs.
- We need candidates who serve Native interests, who support Indian policy, and fully honor the treaty and trust obligations of the federal government
- We need Native vote and “Tribal Sovereignty Ticket” advocates to show up at town halls or candidate forums to pose the questions, “What do you have in store for Native voters and Tribal Nations?” This might make the news cycle.
- Go to NativeVote.org to review NCAI policy information on the Tribal sovereignty ticket and treaty and trust platform.

Dos and Don'ts

Do

- Encourage questions and share links to nativevote.org and other relevant resources
- Stick to the core message and talking points of the NCAI GOTV efforts
- Emphasize the *nonpartisan* nature of the effort
- Support your points with data and statistics (see nativevote.org for details)
- Support your points with true stories from your community, delegates, or constituents
- Focus on the issue and not the candidate

Don't

- Engage in partisan discussions
- Don't name candidates by name.
- Appear to favor one political party or political candidate over another
- "Wing it!" Only state facts; unverified claims or promises hurt the initiative
- Get negative—be sure you avoid criticisms or disparagements of individuals or groups
- Don't overuse language that might be perceived as blaming for past transgressions in Federal Indian history. Those who feel they are being blamed will simply dismiss your message.
- Share any confidential or sensitive information related to NCAI GOTV

Communication Tips

- Relax but be alert and maintain awareness of your nonverbal communication.
- Make sure you understand the question. Ask for clarification as needed. Remember that it's OK to have this guide or your notes with you.
- Speak in simple terms. Avoid jargon.
- Use stories, anecdotes, examples, and analogies to bring your points to life.
- Avoid giving the whole history of your Tribal Nation or the Native experience. Being succinct will increase the likelihood of your message resonating.
- Be conversational but speak with confidence.
- If your interview is virtual or over the phone, make sure you're in a quiet environment and that you have a good connection.
- Stay on message

Handling Challenging Questions

Challenging questions are an opportunity to address concerns directly and show your expertise. You can show your commitment to your Native voters when you take on challenging questions! The key to handling challenging questions is framing your response

to focus on the positive aspects of the NCAI GOTV campaign and using the question as an opportunity to highlight key messages and reinforce our core commitment to making sure Native voters are heard in the 2024 General Election.

Question: Is this initiative a way to influence the outcome of the election?

Response: No. The focus is to increase voter participation among all Native Americans. We believe a healthy democracy depends on the participation of all voters, whether Democrat, Republican, or Indian.

Question: What are your thoughts on voter fraud?

Response: The integrity of the voting process is very serious. [Add a relevant comment about secure and accurate voter registration.]

Question: “Have you seen these statistics or heard this statement ...”

Response: I haven’t seen those numbers.

Response: That’s not my understanding of the situation at this time.

Response: We may have different sources because I’m not familiar with the one you cite.

Response: If you’d like to have a follow up after this interview, I’d be willing.

If you don’t know the answer, offer one of these responses:

I don’t know the answer to that but what I do know is ...

That’s a great question. I will be glad to research your question and get back to you.

That is not my area of expertise.

I am not in a position to speak to that.

Soundbites

For Tribal Leaders

- Our Native voices are powerful—let’s make sure we’re heard loud and clear!
- Where possible, repeat the use of, “Tribal Sovereignty Ticket” and “Federal Policy supportive of the treaty and trust obligations.”
- Voting is how we shape the future of our people. Vote! So, we have a say.
- Our communities are our strength. Tell your aunties and uncles, all your relatives, to vote. Tell them to be engaged citizens!
- Let’s turn out in record numbers this election. Register to vote and then vote early, mail in your ballot, or get to your polling place on November 5, 2024.

For Tribal Administrators

- Be sure you have correct information about your voting place and who’s on your ballot and do your civic duty and vote.

- Share the resources you use to make your voting decisions with your friends and relatives. The more informed our Native voters are the harder our votes hit this election.
- Regardless of how Native voters cast their ballots, voting is a Native right that should be easy and accessible. Help your friends and relatives be empowered voters this year.
- Let's make sure no one in our community is left out of this voting process. Let's make it a reality that every eligible Native voter can cast their ballot, whether it's early voting, mail-in voting, or voting on November 5 at their polling place.

For Tribal Legislators

- Your job as legislators is to protect and promote the Native right to vote. Let's make sure every Native vote is counted and remove barriers to casting votes in this 2024 election.
- Let's make sure our Native voters know how to vote to support the policies that reflect our tribal needs and priorities.
- The health of our Native communities depends on everyone having a voice. Let's be certain every eligible Native voter participates this year.
- Voting is a Native right, and a strong voter turnout is a sign of thriving democracy. Let's encourage every Native citizen to participate in this year's election!

For more information, go to NativeVote.org

LET NO VOTE BE WASTED - GET OUT THE NATIVE VOTE FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION

★ VOTE ON NOVEMBER 5, 2024 ★



WHEN NATIVES SHOW UP TO VOTE, WE ELECT LEADERS WHO PAY ATTENTION TO OUR ISSUES AND CHANGE POLICIES TO ALIGN WITH OUR NEEDS!



SOME ELECTED LEADERS ARE STILL WORKING TO LIMIT THE NATIVE AMERICAN VOTE

LET'S HAVE A DEMOCRACY WHERE ALL OUR VOICES ARE HEARD!



IT IS TIME TO ELIMINATE ALL BARRIERS STANDING BETWEEN NATIVE VOTERS AND THE BALLOT BOX

CHECK YOUR REGISTRATION STATUS!
GET REGISTERED!

GET OUT THE 
NATIVE VOTE
 **'SKO VOTE DEN!**
www.nativevote.org



One-page example