

AB 2314 (Ramos) – As Introduced February 14, 2020

Vote: 7 - 0

Reimbursable: No

- 1) **Background.** Citizens of the United States are provided protections of their right to vote by the 15th Amendment to the US Constitution and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA). The 15th Amendment states "[t]he right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude," and the VRA further provides that "[n]o voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure shall be imposed or applied by any State or political subdivision to deny or abridge that right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color."

However, Native American communities have historically had 5% to 14% lower voter turnout than other ethnic groups.

The author contends:

This trend can be traced back to historical discrimination against Native Americans. It was not until 1924 that full citizenship was granted, and many American Indian/Alaska Natives were prohibited from voting until the 1970s. Traditional discriminatory voter suppression tactics such as poll taxes, literacy tests, and intimidation also depress voter turnout.

A 2019 Brennan Center for Justice analysis found that Native American communities still face obstacles and challenges to participating in the electoral process such as not having a traditional street addresses, which may result in a rejected voter registration. The analysis also found that that Native American communities often face a lack of polling sites, infrastructure for early voting and election day resources.

- 2) **Purpose.** This bill requires the SOS to establish an advisory committee which would make recommendations to improve the accessibility of elections to Native American voters.
- 3) **Prior Legislation.** AB 1443 (Chau), Chapter 347, Statutes of 2015, established and codified the Language Accessibility Advisory Committee (LAAC) to advise the SOS on issues related to language accessibility of elections and election materials.

AB 683 (Low), Chapter 334, Statutes of 2015, required the SOS to establish the Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC) to make recommendations for improving access to voting and election materials and to improving the accessibility of elections for voters with disabilities.