



Native Americans to watch at polls

Group's visits promote Indian voting

Associated Press

Sept. 12, 2004 12:00 AM

OKLAHOMA CITY - A national American Indian group plans to put poll watchers at voting precincts with a high percentage of American Indian voters in Oklahoma, Arizona and 11 other states on Nov. 2.

The Native Vote 2004: Election Protection Project is an initiative to ensure that every Indian voter who is eligible to vote does, and that each vote is counted fairly, said national coordinator Heather Dawn Thompson.

"This has never been done in Indian Country before with the exception of South Dakota. So we're pretty excited about it," said Thompson, who is also president of the Native American Bar Association in Washington, D.C.

Other states included in the project are Alaska, Colorado, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington and Wisconsin.

It is unclear how the group will monitor voting in Oregon since votes are mailed in.

Thompson said problems in South Dakota illustrate the importance of voter's access and education.

During one South Dakota election, partisan poll watchers stood in front of heavily Indian precincts and told voters to go home if they didn't have an ID, Thompson said.

Thompson said South Dakota law allows people who have no ID to vote by signing an affidavit attesting to their identity.