

## Indian Working Group

[indianrights.workinggroup@usdoj.gov](mailto:indianrights.workinggroup@usdoj.gov)

The Division's Indian Working Group helps the Division enforce the laws and meet its responsibilities to Indian Country and Native American people. The Working Group increases awareness of Native American civil rights issues within the Civil Rights Division, within the Department of Justice, and throughout the country. You may contact the Indian Working Group by email at:

[indianrights.workinggroup@usdoj.gov](mailto:indianrights.workinggroup@usdoj.gov).

### For further information, or to file a complaint:

U.S. Department of Justice  
Civil Rights Division  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20530  
202-514-4609 (Voice)  
202-514-0716 (TTY)  
[www.justice.gov/crt](http://www.justice.gov/crt)

Housing and Civil Enforcement – 800-896-7743  
Voting - 800-253-3931  
Criminal - 202-514-3204  
Educational Opportunities - 877-292-3804  
Employment – 202-514-3831;  
202-515-6780 (TTY)  
Special Litigation – 877-218-5228  
Special Counsel - 800-255-7688;  
800-237-2515 (TTY)  
Disability Rights – 800-514-0301;  
800-514-0383 (TTY)  
Appellate - (202) 514-2195  
Federal Coordination and Compliance  
– 888-TITLE-06 (888-848-5306)

U.S. Department of Justice  
Civil Rights Division

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## Protecting the Civil Rights of American Indians and Alaska Natives



*“For far too long Native Americans have experienced discrimination and injustice, and the federal government can and must stop such discrimination.”*

Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights,  
Thomas Perez

### Fighting Discrimination

The Civil Rights Division enforces civil rights laws that protect American Indians and Alaska Natives from discrimination based on race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, or membership in a language minority group. Such discrimination is forbidden in education, employment, credit, housing, public accommodations, voting, and in certain federally-funded programs.

### Introduction

American Indians and Alaska Natives are protected by federal civil rights laws. The Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice enforces federal laws barring discrimination based on a person's race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or religion. National origin discrimination includes failure to provide language services such as interpreters or translations for people who don't speak English. The law forbids discrimination in education, employment, credit, housing, public accommodations, voting, and in federally-funded and conducted programs, as well as hate crimes.

### Criminal Civil Rights Laws

[www.justice.gov/crt/about/crm](http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/crm)

Federal law prohibits acts of violence aimed at you because of your race, color, religion, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability. Federal laws protect people from human trafficking – including forced labor and coerced commercial sex. Federal law prohibits federal, state, and local police officers, or other officials acting under color of law from willfully violating constitutional or federal rights, including by excessive force or unwanted sexual contact. To report criminal civil rights violations, contact the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

### Jails, Prisons, Disability Facilities, and Other Government-Run Institutions

[www.justice.gov/crt/split](http://www.justice.gov/crt/split)

The Division protects the rights of people confined in facilities run by state or local governments, including jails, prisons, juvenile corrections, and institutions, from mistreatment based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, or disability. Facilities cannot keep people in egregious conditions that cause them grievous

harm. The Division also protects inmates' right to practice their religion without unnecessary restriction. The laws we enforce do not cover federal facilities. Contact the Special Litigation Section to make a complaint.

### Police Misconduct

[www.justice.gov/crt/split](http://www.justice.gov/crt/split)

It is illegal for state or local law enforcement offices to systematically deprive people of their rights. Federal laws protect people from constitutional violations such as excessive force; unlawful stops, searches, or arrests; and discriminatory policing. We investigate misconduct based on race, color, national origin, sex, and sexual orientation. We can also intervene where police improperly punish people for observing officers, recording them, or objecting to their actions. Contact the Special Litigation Section to make a complaint.

### Lending

[www.justice.gov/crt/about/hce](http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/hce)

It is illegal to discriminate in lending based on a person's race, color, gender, or national origin. If you believe that you were denied a loan because you are Native American, or because you live on a reservation, you can ask the lender for a written explanation of why you were denied the loan.

If you believe you were denied or charged more for a housing loan, you can file an individual complaint with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) (telephone (800) 669-9777 or (800) 927-9275 (TDD)). You can file a complaint with the Housing and Civil Enforcement Section if there is a pattern or practice of lending discrimination against a class or group of people. If the loan is not related to housing (for example, a car loan or a credit card), you can file a discrimination complaint either with the Housing and Civil Enforcement

Section, the regulatory agency in charge of the lender, or the Federal Trade Commission (1-877-FTC-HELP or [www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov](http://www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov)).

### **Housing**

[www.justice.gov/crt/about/hce](http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/hce)

It is illegal to discriminate in providing housing based on a person's race, color, national origin, religion, gender, disability, or familial status. If you believe you have been discriminated against in renting or buying a place to live because you are Native American, you may file a complaint. The Housing and Civil Enforcement Section handles cases where there is a pattern or practice of discrimination in housing against a class or group of victims. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) ((800) 669-9777 (voice) or (800) 927-9275 (TDD) or [www.hud.gov/fairhousing](http://www.hud.gov/fairhousing)) investigates individual complaints of housing discrimination.

### **Places of Worship**

[www.justice.gov/crt/about/hce](http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/hce)

Federal laws protect places of worship. They restrict how local governments can use zoning rules or other land use regulations if they harm religious practices. If you are the victim of this kind of discrimination, you can file a complaint with the Housing and Civil Enforcement Section.

### **Public Accommodations**

[www.justice.gov/crt/about/hce](http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/hce)

Certain businesses, such as hotels, restaurants, and theaters or other places of entertainment (called "public accommodations"), may not discriminate because of race, color, religion, or national origin. If one of these places has discriminated against you – for example, by not letting you in, not giving you equal access, or not giving you equal service, contact the Housing and Civil Enforcement Section.

### **Employment**

[www.justice.gov/crt/about/emp](http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/emp)

[www.justice.gov/crt/about/osc](http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/osc)

An employer cannot refuse to hire or promote you, or discipline, harass, or fire you because you are Native American. Federal law prohibits employers from discriminating based on a person's race, gender, color, religion, national origin, or disability. The law also prohibits an employer from retaliating because you complain about something you think violates this law. If an employer has discriminated against you because you are Native American, contact the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) at (800) 669-4000 (voice) or (800) 669-6820 (TDD). If a state or local government employer has discriminated against you because you are Native American, you may also contact the Employment Litigation Section. If an employer refuses to hire you or fires you based on your citizenship or immigration status, or if a small employer (with 4-14 employees) refuses to hire you or fires you based on national origin, it may be violating the anti-discrimination provision of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). If an employer refuses to accept an American Indian tribal document or other acceptable documents to show you are a citizen or eligible to work in the U.S., it may be violating the INA. In such cases, contact the Office of Special Counsel for Immigration-Related Unfair Employment Practices.

### **Servicemembers' Rights**

[www.servicemembers.gov](http://www.servicemembers.gov)

Federal law also prohibits denying employment rights because of a person's U.S. military service. If an employer has discriminated against you because of your military service, contact a local Veterans' Training and Employment Service of the Department of Labor. Federal law also protects those in the military in civil court cases, foreclosures, repossessions, interest

rates, income taxes, and more. Contact a military legal assistance office: <http://legalassistance.law.af.mil/content/locator.php>.

### **Voting**

[www.justice.gov/crt/about/vot](http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/vot)

As citizens of the United States and of the state where you live, you have the right to vote free of discrimination in federal, state, and local elections. Native Americans are protected from discrimination and intimidation when they vote or when they want to run for federal, state, and local elected offices. Federal laws prohibit voting systems or practices (such as having at-large elections instead of creating electoral districts) when they improperly dilute the votes of Native Americans. This law gives Native Americans the right to a fair opportunity to be represented on state legislatures, county commissions, school boards, or other elected groups.

Some states and counties with a history of discrimination against minority voters – including some parts of Indian Country – must get federal approval to change their voting practices or procedures. The new practices must not discriminate against racial or language minorities, including Native Americans.

Federal observers also may go to polling places in certain jurisdictions to make sure minority voters and voters with disabilities are allowed to vote without discrimination. County officials in some areas also must give voter information in Native languages. These requirements apply to state and local governments. They do not apply to tribal governments or tribal elections. To find out if a jurisdiction is covered, or to make an election-related complaint, contact the Voting Section.

### **Education**

<http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/edu>

Native American children have the right to the same educational opportunities that are offered to all other children attending the same public schools. Federal law prohibits public elementary schools, secondary schools, and colleges and universities from denying students equal educational opportunities because of their race, color, national origin, sex, religion, or disability. Public schools must also offer English language learner students appropriate services to help them overcome language barriers so that they can meaningfully participate in school. Finally, the Division works to stop harassment and bullying in the public schools on the basis of race, national origin, sex, religion, or disability.

If you or your child has been denied access to an educational program or faced discrimination at a public school, contact the Educational Opportunities Section. If your school district receives federal funds, you also can contact the U.S. Department of Education at (800) 421-3481. If the school is operated by the Bureau of Indian Education, contact (202) 208-6123.

### **Disabilities**

<http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/drs/>

[www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination based on disability in employment, or in state and local government programs and services. It also bars discrimination by hotels, restaurants, stores, theaters, medical offices, hospitals, and other businesses that serve the public (known as "places of public accommodation"). The ADA does not apply to tribal governments. To report disability discrimination, contact the Disability Rights Section.