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Utah Navajo Plaintiffs Ask Court to Dismiss Baseless Counterclaim in Voting Rights Case

SAN JUAN COUNTY, UTAH – Today the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission and seven members of the Navajo Nation – plaintiffs in an ongoing lawsuit over voting rights and voter access in San Juan County – filed a motion in the U.S. District Court of Utah to dismiss a recent counterclaim by San Juan County and its officials.

“The counterclaim is an unfortunate distraction from a serious lawsuit about the voting rights of a historically marginalized community in rural Utah,” said Leah Farrell, Staff Attorney with the ACLU of Utah and co-counsel on the original lawsuit, *Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission v. San Juan County et al.* “This lawsuit is about – and only about – how San Juan County’s election processes disenfranchise Navajo voters. Fifty years ago, when the Voting Rights Act was first proposed, brave Americans gave their lives for the right to vote. These plaintiffs are helping to ensure that this fundamental right does not unravel.”

The original lawsuit was filed in late February. It arose from the county’s decision in 2014 to close all polling places and switch to a mail-only voting system. The lawsuit alleges that San Juan County has violated key provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

“We brought this lawsuit to ensure that Navajo voters have equal access to the ballot box in San Juan County,” said Arusha Gordon, Associate Counsel with the Legal Mobilization Project of the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, also co-counsel in *NNHRC v. San Juan County et al.* “This counterclaim does nothing to advance that goal.”

In addition to ACLU of Utah and the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, co-counsel on this case includes the national ACLU Voting Rights Project and DLA Piper, LLP (USA).

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