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SECRETARY UDALL APPROVES CHANGES IN INDIAN VOTE
CODE TO AID TRIBAL GOVERNMENT

Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall has approved changes in Federal regulations governing conduct of certain tribal elections authorized under the Indian Reorganization Act. The changes, which are being published in the Federal Register, are designed primarily to facilitate tribal government.

Comments received by the Bureau of Indian Affairs since proposed changes were announced in February have been considered in preparation of the new regulations.

The Bureau informed Secretary Udall that shifting Indian populations have had the effect of often invalidating elections because only a small percentage of a tribe voted.

Under the revisions, which are in keeping with national, state, and local custom, tribal members would be required to register in order to vote in elections authorized by Section 16 of the Indian Reorganization Act. At least 30 percent of those on the registration list would have to cast ballots for an election to be valid.

Under present procedures, registration is not a factor. Rules require that at least 30 percent of "all" eligible voters have to vote for an election to be valid. This often results in no decision, because many eligible voters lack interest and do not bother to vote.

Provision is continued for registered, eligible tribal members to vote by absentee ballot. When prepared, the life of any list of registered voters will extend for three years, with the responsibility upon the registrant to make changes in his status as necessary.

Another change establishes a definite, consistent standard for deciding whether sufficient eligible voters actually sign an election petition when such a procedure is recognized for effecting elections.

In conjunction with elections, the tribal election board will be required to notify by mail all adult Indians of the tribe of the need to register if they intend to vote.

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