

Democratic Party of New Mexico looks to Outreach Organizer to spread awareness

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
Friday, 02 October 2020 04:37



The 2020 Presidential Election is getting closer, and organizers and supporters of both political parties are gearing up.

Whether it is encouraging people to register to vote or building support for their respective candidates, the coming weeks will be a frenzy for groups like the Democratic Party of New Mexico.

As part of getting the word out about being registered to vote and voting safely, DPNM recently brought on a director exclusively for outreach to Tribal nations, Kianna Holian.

The *Sun* spoke with Holian about her role and the upcoming election on Sept. 23.

WHY OUTREACH?

Originally from the Pueblo of Cochiti, Holian attended the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, which she said deepened her passion for serving New Mexico.

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“I learned about different tribes and Pueblos across the state, and I didn’t know about all the differences until I went back to my reservation,” Holian said. “That’s where I gained the knowledge of what I wanted to do.”

Holian said she was drawn to the position with DPNM because she would be able to do outreach on a larger scale, which she now does across the state. She has been in her position for about two months.

“It’s been going well. I enjoy reaching out to community members,” she said. “I’ve seen that New Mexico is really connected because you’ll see people from the community talking with each other and telling you where to go.”

She added DPNM is excited to ramp up their outreach and support efforts as the election looms.

“The countdown is on,” she said.

OUTREACH DUTIES

At its core, Holian said the goal of an outreach director is to build lasting relations between Tribal governments and DPNM.

“We have to learn what we can offer to them for support, as well as give advice of when and where they can vote,” she said.

With the COVID-19 pandemic on people’s minds, Holian said DPNM is looking for safe and unique ways to spread the word about voting safely and correctly.

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“We want to make sure they’re aware of changed polling locations,” Holian said. “Most places are only open for one day for early voting, so we make sure they know that, too.

“We are really highlighting the different ways people can vote. I’ve also been partnering with the voter protection team to create a hotline to help people who have questions about voting,” she added.

Holian said the level of awareness of voting means varies depending on whether a community has the right coordinator in place.

“In our tribal communities with a designated voting coordinator or voting community, they’re on top of it,” she said. “Those people are working on census duties and preparing communities to vote. But in some smaller communities that don’t have that dedicated person, they’re working on getting the word out.”

It is primarily the more remote or rural communities that lack a dedicated coordinator, she added.

NEXT STEPS

As Election Day draws closer, Holian is going to be an additional point of contact for Tribal communities.

Ultimately, Holian will make sure Tribal communities are aware of the voting process and spread the word about when and where to vote safely.

“If Tribal members want to receive direct information about the election, they would reach out to me and their county clerks,” she said. “I’m also working closely with the Native American Democratic Caucus and we’re focused on getting the whole state to vote.”

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As part of this outreach, Holian said DPNM is going to hold a virtual Indigenous People's Day event on Oct. 12.

"We are planning to have a lot of community members come and speak at this event," she said. "Everyone's really excited about it and it'll [be a] good way to gather people virtually. We want to bring people together to celebrate, have fun, and also inform the communities to make sure they vote."

Voters can visit DPNM's website at <https://nmdemocrats.org/voter-education/> to find additional information, such as information on registration and voting and volunteer opportunities.

Voters can also contact the DPNM Election Hotline at 1-833-NM4DEMS.

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