

SENECA NATION OF INDIANS



CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM REFERENDUM

2026

REFERENDUM QUESTION 1

Increase in number of Surrogates Court judges from one for each of the Allegany and Cattaraugus Reservations to three for each of the Allegany and Cattaraugus Reservations.

This proposed amendment is intended to make the process of distributing estate assets and closing estates more efficient and expedient than current practice by adding more judges to the Surrogates Court and giving each judge the authority to hear and decide cases.

Text of Question:

The Surrogates Court shall be comprised of three judges each, any one of whom shall have the power to hold Court and discharge all the duties of the Surrogates Court.

YES []

NO []

A “YES” vote on this question would mean that the total number of Surrogates Court judges would increase from two (2) to six (6). Currently, the Constitution provides for one (1) judge for the Allegany Surrogates Court and one (1) judge for the Cattaraugus Surrogates Court. If the Seneca People approve this amendment to the Constitution, then there would be three (3) judges for each of the Allegany and Cattaraugus Surrogates Courts. Any one of the Surrogates Court judges would have the authority to hold court and render decisions. Importantly, if approved, this provision would go into effect during the 2027 judicial election, as judicial elections only occur every two years.

A “NO” vote on Question 1 means that the current system of one judge for each Surrogates Court would remain in place.

Text of Amendment:

Section IV, paragraph two, the fourth sentence to be amended as follows:

The Surrogates Court shall be comprised of three judges each, any one of whom shall have the power to hold Court and discharge all the duties of the Surrogates Court.

REFERENDUM QUESTION 2

Implement training requirement for all judges before they take office and annually during their term of office.

The purpose of this proposed amendment is to ensure that all judges – whether elected or appointed – have and continue to receive training in the laws, customs, and procedures of the Seneca Nation.

Text of Question:

The judges in all courts shall be required to receive mandatory training in the laws, customs, and judicial procedures of the Nation before taking office and annually during their term of office.

YES []

NO []

A “YES” vote on this amendment would impose a training requirement for all judges before they can hear cases and also every year while they are in office. The training curriculum for judges would be set or authorized through Council resolution. If approved, the judges in all Nation courts would be compelled by the Constitution to attend training sessions.

A “NO” vote means that only the Court of Appeals judges would continue to have any training requirements imposed by the Constitution.

Text of Amendment:

Section IV, paragraph two, add a new fifth sentence as follows:

The judges in all courts shall be required to receive mandatory training in the laws, customs, and judicial procedures of the Nation before taking office and annually during their term of office.

REFERENDUM QUESTION 3

Limit of three consecutive terms in the same office.

This proposed amendment is intended to increase public service opportunities for all Senecas. The regular introduction of new ideas and new ways of thinking in our government should create a more vibrant and representative democracy and will help the Seneca Nation keep up with the rapidly changing outside world.

Text of Question:

Elected officers of the Nation shall be limited to no more than three consecutive terms in the same office, where all three such consecutive terms begin after the November 2025 election.

YES []

NO []

A “YES” vote on this amendment means that elected officials would not be able to serve in the same office, e.g., Councillor, for more than three consecutive terms. It would not prohibit a person from serving three consecutive terms in the same office and then being elected to a different office. This amendment is intended to have prospective application only. In other words, the first term that would be counted toward three consecutive terms would be a term of office beginning in November of 2025.

A “NO” vote would maintain the status quo of elected officials being eligible to serve an unlimited number of consecutive terms in the same office.

Text of Amendment:

Section IX, add a new second paragraph as follows:

Elected officers of the Nation shall be limited to no more than three consecutive terms in the same office, where all three such consecutive terms begin after the November 2025 election.

REFERENDUM QUESTION 4

Impose residency requirements on all Nation officials named in the Constitution.

The purpose of this proposed amendment is to ensure that all officers of the Seneca Nation are residents of the Territory they represent. Presently, the Clerk, Treasurer, Highway Commissioners, Overseers of the Poor, Assessors, and Policemen have no constitutional residency requirement. Court of Appeals judges, Peacemakers judges, Surrogates Court judges, and Marshals are required to be residents of the Territories they represent but they are not required to reside on the Territory for any set amount of time. Only the President and Councillors are required to reside on the Reservation they represent for one year – at any point in their lives – before taking office. With this amendment, all Nation officers named in the Constitution would be required to live on Territory for at least one year immediately prior to taking office. This amendment would also ensure that all officers of the Nation continue to live on Territory during their term of office.

Text of Question:

All officers of the Nation named in this Constitution, with terms commencing in November 2026 and thereafter, shall be required to reside on the Reservation they represent for at least the one year immediately prior to taking office and during their term of office.

YES []

NO []

A “YES” vote would impose a residency requirement on all candidates and appointees, for any office, and would further impose a continuing residency requirement on all officers named in the Constitution beginning with the 2026 election. Candidates would only be eligible to run for office if they have resided on the Territory they represent for at least one year immediately prior to the date they would take office. Similarly, prospective appointees to any office would need to reside on the Territory they would represent for the one year before they take their appointed office. All officers of the Nation named in the Constitution – whether appointed or elected, and regardless of which branch – would be required to maintain residency on the Territory they represent during their term of office.

A “NO” vote would result in no change to the current residency requirement provided by the Constitution. A “NO” vote would also mean that elected and appointed officials are not required to maintain residency on Territory while serving in office.

Text of Amendment:

A. Section IX, paragraph one, add a new second sentence as follows:

All officers of the Nation named in this Constitution, with terms commencing in November 2026 and thereafter, shall be required to reside on the Reservation they represent for at least the one year immediately prior to taking office and during their term of office.

B. Section I, paragraph two, amend the fifth sentence as follows:

No person shall be eligible for the office of Councillor unless he is an enrolled member of the Nation, has attained age twenty-one (21), and has resided on the Reservation he represents for at least the one (1) year immediately prior to the date on which he takes office and during their term of office.

C. Section X, paragraph one, amend the second sentence as follows:

Enrolled members of the Seneca Nation of Indians of the age of twenty-one (21) years and upwards, who shall not have been convicted of a felony, shall be eligible to any office in the gift of the people of the Nation, except that no person shall be eligible for the office of president unless he is an enrolled member of the Nation, has attained the age of thirty (30) years, has resided on the Reservation he represents for at least the one (1) year immediately prior to taking office and during his or her term of office.

REFERENDUM QUESTION 5

Increase the President's, Treasurer's, and Clerk's terms to four (4) years beginning with the election of November 2026.

This proposed amendment to the Constitution is intended to provide greater political and economic stability for the Seneca Nation by giving the executives of the Nation four-year terms.

Text of Question:

The President, Treasurer, and Clerk shall be elected to four-year terms.

YES []

NO []

A "YES" vote would mean that the President, Treasurer, and Clerk elected in the November 2026 election – and every President, Treasurer, and Clerk thereafter – would serve four-year terms.

A "NO" vote would continue the two-year terms of the President, Treasurer, and Clerk.

Text of Amendment:

Section IX, paragraph one, add a new first sentence as follows:

The President, Treasurer, and Clerk shall be elected to four-year terms.