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Native Leaders Testify at U.S. House Hearing on Diversifying Native Economies

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASHINGTON—September 19, 2007—Greg DuMontier, chairman of the Native American Contractors Association (NACA) urged Members of the House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources to play a proactive role in the future of the Native 8(a) contracting program. At a hearing on the 8 (a) program, DuMontier asked Members of the Committee to help educate others in Congress about the federal government's unique relationship with Native Americans and the importance of the Native 8 (a) program.


"The Small Business Administration's 8(a) government contracting program is a crucial component to building diversified Native economies," DuMontier testified. "The continued economic success and well being of Native communities depends on the combined and sustained efforts of Indian tribes and Alaska Native Corporations (ANC), the federal government, and the private sector."

NACA, along with the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), and the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development (NCAIED) are working together to provide recommendations on how 8(a) regulatory compliance can be improved to increase transparency and accountability, and to provide legislative recommendations to enhance the ability of all small businesses to have a larger share of contract awards.

DuMontier and NCAI President Joe A. Garcia stressed three main points during the hearing on "Diversifying Native Economies": 1) that the program is indeed working; 2) that Native participation in government contracting is small (less than one percent) but it has a big impact on local Native economies; and 3) the program is a hand up and not a hand out.

"Tribes, villages and communities have been successful in three primary government enterprise areas – natural resource management, gaming and hospitality and government contracting," Garcia said. "Government contracting has emerged as viable industry for successful tribal enterprise development because it allows for greater self determination."

Jonathan Taylor, a researcher specializing in tribal economic development, recently released economic report on the 8(a) program, "until growth reaches further, tribal and ANC 8(a) contracting exemptions should remain a part of Congress' arsenal of policies supporting American Indian and Alaska Native economic development." His economic report shows that the 8(a) program brings revenue growth and rising business sophistication to Indian Country and Native Alaska.



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