



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #SPO-16-007

TITLE: Support of Senator Tester's SAFETY Act

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WHEREAS, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

WHEREAS, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

WHEREAS, it is widely known that the Bureau of Indian Education's (BIE) Operation and Maintenance funding is insufficient to meet the needs of schools throughout Indian Country; and

WHEREAS, although many BIE schools are in desperate need of immediate assistance, due to the great cost to the federal government to replace many of these facilities, earlier this year BIE selected just 10 schools to move forward with the application process for school construction funding, and then only selected five schools for repairs; and

WHEREAS, although five schools will be repaired, with the existing backlog, many schools will be in much worse condition than they are in now before they are bad enough to be fixed, even though they are currently in substandard condition; and

WHEREAS, Senator Jon Tester has introduced the SAFETY Act, to increase educational opportunities in Indian Country by building and upgrading classrooms, teacher housing, dormitories, STEM labs, and vocational facilities for BIE schools, tribal colleges and universities, and state-run schools with large populations of Native students; and

WHEREAS, SAFETY Act would create the Tribal School Construction Demonstration Program, which during FY 2017-2021 would provide tribes with the ability to apply for construction funds which would be awarded to eligible schools on the priority list, and would allow the tribes to contribute at least 25% of the total cost for the upgrades; and

WHEREAS, this innovative solution would accelerate construction for all BIE schools, and would give tribes an opportunity to invest in the improvement of the schools and at the same time, would provide additional funds to allow more of the priority schools to be improved more quickly; and

WHEREAS, SAFETY Act is a new solution for an old problem, and would allow tribes to work with the BIE to alleviate some of the significant backlog, and create new educational opportunities in Indian Country; and

WHEREAS, SAFETY Act secures much-needed facility funding for TCUs to enhance their campuses to better serve their students and local tribal communities; and

WHEREAS, at a future date when Alaska Native tribes are included in the BIE funding, Alaska Native tribes shall be included for future solutions for facility needs for Alaska Native students; and

WHEREAS, the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs unanimously approved SAFETY Act on April 27, 2016; and

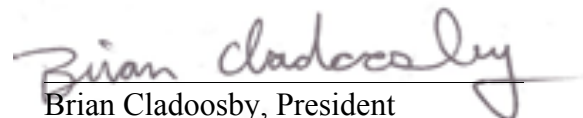
WHEREAS, Representative Ann Kirkpatrick has introduced a companion bill, H.R. 4744, in the House.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Congress of American Indians supports Congressional and Administrative efforts to create innovative solutions to the significant backlog of BIE school repairs and replacements, tribal college facilities needs and the education and facilities needs of Alaska Native students because we believe that all investing in the education of Native students is critical to our shared future; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2016 Midyear Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Spokane Convention Center, June 27 to June 30, 2016, with a quorum present.


Brian Cladoosby, President

ATTEST:


Aaron Payment, Recording Secretary