



Protection of Native cultural resources is critical to the vitality of traditional Native religions, customs, languages, and tribal sovereignty. These resources may include not only land and objects but also cultural practices, languages, and symbols. Seventy of the remaining 139 spoken tribal languages could become extinct by 2015.

Historic & Cultural Preservation

Cultural preservation has always been an important aspect of Native culture and lifeways. However, it is only in the past 20 years that the federal government acknowledged Native peoples' rightful role as stewards of historic and sacred places throughout the country. As sovereign nations, tribes work to maintain historic and cultural preservation, and these efforts stand as an act of self-governance and self-determination.

Key Recommendations

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Interior - Environment Appropriations Bill

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)

- Provide \$4 million for Section 10 of NAGPRA and create a line item for grants to fund work that would lead to cleared determinations of culturally-unidentifiable remains.

Section 10 of NAGPRA authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to award grants to museums, tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations to assist in the repatriation of Native American human remains and cultural items. Over the past few years, the National Park Service NAGPRA program has used a high percentage of funds from the Section 10 grant program to cover their administrative costs, which has resulted in fewer dollars for tribes. Tribes should also receive priority in Section 10 grant awards, and a separate line item should be created to fund work with culturally-unidentifiable remains.

- Provide a 10 percent increase for investigations into failure of museums or other institutions to comply with NAGPRA, and create a line item for investigations of tribal complaints against museums or other institutions.

The number of tribal complaints made about museums failing to comply with NAGPRA has grown exponentially in the past few years, and the Department of the Interior is unable to respond to tribes in a timely manner. Dedicated funding for investigations of tribal complaints is essential for the spirit of NAGPRA to be fully implemented.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Interior - Environment Appropriations Bill

Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Program

- Provide \$15 million for the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Program.

In 1992, amendments to the federal National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) created the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) program that is operated by the National Park Service and funded by the Historic Preservation Fund. At least 136 tribes will be operating THPO programs in FY 2013. Among other duties, THPOs record and preserve unique cultures by capturing oral histories, preserving and rejuvenating Native languages, and seeking the return of Native American ancestral and sacred objects. THPOs also have a critical federal-tribal role in the Section 106 process of the NHPA – which requires government-to-government consultation regarding sacred places and objects – that is greatly underfunded, even in light of the currently grim fiscal environment.