

Decolonial Repair Politics and Change

Decolonial Repair Network



www.fcnl.org

Home > Updates > Native American Legislative Update

February 2024: Native American Legislative Update

Welcome to FCNL's Native American Legislative Update!
NALU is a monthly newsletter about FCNL's Native American policy advocacy and ways for you to engage members of Congress.

National Congress of American Indians (NCAI)



Founded in 1944, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) is the oldest, largest, and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization serving the broad interests of tribal governments and communities.

National Congress of American Indians (NCAI)

Feb 2025

Priorities

1. *Preserving Native nations' access to grants, programs, and funding*

Tribal leaders reported that many grants which offer services to their members have been interrupted, held up, or cancelled due to the federal funding freeze. Unilaterally pausing, cancelling, or holding these grants is a brazen violation of the U.S.'s treaty and trust responsibility to tribal nations.

National Congress of American Indians (NCAI)

Feb 2025

Priorities

2. Upholding tribal sovereignty.

In his [State of Indian Nations address](#), NCAI President Mark Macarro (Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians) emphasized the importance of the government-to-government relationship that Native nations hold with the U.S.

National Congress of American Indians (NCAI)

Feb 2025

Priorities

3. Listening to youth voices

NCAI's Youth Commission co-presidents, Madison Brown (Seneca Nation) and Angelina Serna (Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians and Oneida Nation of Wisconsin) called for more opportunities for young people in Indian Country.

Senate Committee Hears Priorities for 119th Congress

The Senate Committee on Indian Affairs held a [hearing](#) on Native communities' priorities for the next two years. Chair Lisa Murkowski (AK) emphasized the bipartisan nature of the committee's work. She expressed the committee's concerns over the administration's executive actions to freeze federal grants and interrupt services in tribal communities. During the hearing, tribal leaders stressed the need for investments in Indian Country, especially for criminal justice concerns and healthcare.

Bridging Agency Data Gaps and Ensuring Safety (BADGES) for Native Communities Act Reintroduced

On February 4, the BADGES Act was reintroduced by Sens. Catherine Cortez Masto (NV), John Hoeven (ND), Ruben Gallego (AZ), and Mike Rounds (SD). This bipartisan bill would give tribes access to needed resources to address the **Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples** crisis and the authority to make decisions to keep their communities safe.

The bill was first introduced in the 118th Congress and passed the Senate unanimously but did not pass the House.

Senators Ask ICE about Detentions of Tribal Citizens

In January, we mentioned unconfirmed reports that Native Americans are being targeted by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), both on and off reservations.

Since then, it has become clear that tribal citizens have in fact been targeted, harassed, and detained by ICE. Thirteen senators sent a letter on Feb 18 to Kristi Noem, the Secretary of Homeland Security, asking what steps her department is taking to ensure that ICE agents recognize tribal identification as proof of U.S. citizenship.

Bureau of Indian Education Staff, Teachers Laid Off

An executive order requiring agencies to fire all newly hired, transferred, or promoted employees has led to layoffs at Haskell Indian Nations University and the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI). Both colleges, operated by the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), have had at least 40 employees laid off. At SIPI, layoffs have jeopardized current class offerings at the school. The broader BIE has also lost close to a third of its administrative staff at a time when outcomes for BIE students have been under continued scrutiny.

Executive Orders and their Impact on Indian Country

Executive Orders are powerful tools that allow presidents to enact policy changes without congressional approval.

For Native communities, this means funding for education, healthcare, and infrastructure can shift and even disappear overnight.

Unlike laws enacted by Congress, citizens and our elected representatives are often unable to override these orders except through extreme coordinated action, undermining a check on the power of the executive branch.

What Is an Executive Order? and How Do the EO's Enacted Impact Indian Country, American Indian College Fund, Feb 16, 2025

<https://standwith.collegefund.org/issues-impacting-indian-country/what-is-an-executive-order-and-how-do-the-eos-enacted-impact-indian-country>

Executive Orders and their Impact on Indian Country

From land use laws to education funding freezes, executive orders can directly and immediately impact Native communities.

When EO's limit funding for Title I schools, Pell Grants, and Native education initiatives, Native students lose access to critical scholarships and academic resources, making it harder to graduate and enter the workforce.

What Is an Executive Order? and How Do the EO's Enacted Impact Indian Country, American Indian College Fund, Feb 16, 2025

<https://standwith.collegefund.org/issues-impacting-indian-country/what-is-an-executive-order-and-how-do-the-eos-enacted-impact-indian-country>