

PRESS RELEASE

Senator Barrasso Announces Introduction of RAISE Act at NIEA's Head to the Hill Day



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 25, 2016

Washington, D.C. - At the National Indian Education Association's (NIEA) annual legislative summit, Senator Barrasso (R-WY), Chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, announced he was introducing a bill to Congress that would have ramifications for the future of Native education. The Reforming American Indian Standards of Education (S.2580) (RAISE) Act would eliminate the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) and establish an independent Indian Education Agency within the Department of the Interior.

While speaking to NIEA membership about the bill, Senator Barrasso said, "BIE is not an agency equipped to run schools...the [process] needs to be more streamlined with increased accountability." He went on to say, "My legislation will ensure that the administrators, teachers, and students from tribal communities are being listened to and that their needs are being met. It is an important first step for better transparency and accountability for schools across Indian country."

Under Barrasso's plan a director, who would be appointed to a six-year term, would lead the new Indian Education Agency. The new agency's director would be appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The new agency would also staff two assistant directors, one overseeing education curriculum and the other overseeing facilities management. The bill assumes that by merging all education and administrative offices under the leadership of one agency, a more efficient and functional Indian education system could be established- one that could be responsive to local needs.

NIEA's Executive Director, Ahniwake Rose said of the bill, "The proposed language is a direct response to the reform needed within the BIE system - and Mr. Barrasso has provided a bold proposal on how to improve the process. I look forward to addressing NIEA membership about the bill to better understand how this action would impact their communities and working with Senator Barrasso to determine what is in the best interest of Native students."

NIEA will continue to monitor and provide updates to members on the advancement of this bill. To read S. 2580, please [click here](#).