

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 28, 2016

Mr. Gene L. Dodaro  
Comptroller General of the United States  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro,

The United States is home to 567 federally recognized tribes, each of which has added deeply to our culture and heritage—both past and present. Fundamental to building a strong future is to have an appreciation for and knowledge of the past, which speaks to the importance of preserving and protecting Native American cultural items. For over a century, there has been increasing interest in and curiosity about Native American way of life; but instead of respecting and appreciating the traditional and sacred artifacts that are central to Native American culture, some have chosen to exploit and commercialize them. Native American archaeological and historical sites—located on federal and tribal lands—have been looted, and perpetrators have either kept the confiscated items for their personal enjoyment or they have illegally sold and trafficked the items to collectors or museums.

Regardless of the means or motive for why Native American cultural items are wrongfully taken, it is important to protect and preserve these resources, and doing so is both a legal and moral obligation. In the spirit of the PROTECT Patrimony Resolution (H.Con.Res.122), we believe there are opportunities for the federal government to do more to stop the theft and illegal sale and trafficking of Native American cultural items. Therefore, we are requesting that the Government Accountability Office review the following:

- 1) What, if any, actions has the federal government taken, or could it take, to help prevent the excavation and removal of Native American cultural items from federal and tribal land as well as the illegal trafficking of Native American cultural items?
- 2) What is the status of federal agency efforts to repatriate Native American cultural items under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, and what actions, if any, has the federal government taken to secure the return of other Native American cultural items?
- 3) Over the past 10 years, what have been the results of enforcement actions taken under the Archeological Resources and Protection Act and Native American Graves Protection Repatriation Act involving crimes related to the illegal possession, sale, excavation and removal and trafficking of Native American cultural items?

- 4) Based on information obtained during federal investigations and prosecutions, from where did the perpetrators obtain the cultural items, and for items that were sold, how did they market them and who were the primary customers?

Thank you for your attention to this request. If you have any questions, please contact Scott Johnson by phone at (202) 225-5727 or by email at [Scott.Johnson@mail.house.gov](mailto:Scott.Johnson@mail.house.gov).



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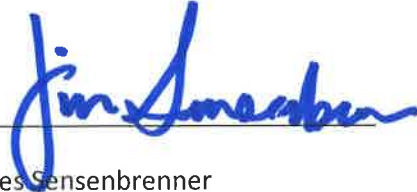
Bob Goodlatte  
Chairman  
House Judiciary Committee



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Stevan Pearce  
Member of Congress

Sincerely,



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F. James Sensenbrenner  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism,  
Homeland Security, and Investigations