



USET

SOVEREIGNTY PROTECTION FUND

Nashville TN Office
711 Stewarts Ferry Pike, Ste. 100
Nashville TN 37214
P: (615) 872-7900
F: (615) 872-7417

Washington DC Office
400 North Capitol St., Ste. 585
Washington DC 20001
P: (202) 624-3550
F: (202) 393-5218

November 19, 2019

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chairman
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
838 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall
Vice Chairman
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
838 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support for Savanna's Act and Not Invisible Act

Dear Chairman Hoeven and Vice Chairman Udall,

We write on behalf of United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF) to express support for S. 227, Savanna's Act, and S. 982, the Not Invisible Act slated for Senate Committee on Indian Affairs consideration during the business meeting scheduled for Wednesday, November 20th. These bills, if enacted, would help to ensure that the United States fulfills more of its public safety obligations to Indian Country. We urge the expeditious approval of both bills at the Committee level and by the United States Congress.

USET SPF represents 30 federally-recognized Tribal Nations from the Canadian Border to the Everglades and across the Gulf of Mexico.¹ USET SPF is dedicated to enhancing the development of Tribal Nations, to improving the capabilities of Tribal governments, and assisting the USET SPF Member Tribal Nations in dealing effectively with public policy issues and in serving the broad needs of Indian people.

The disproportionately high rate at which American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) women and girls experience violent crime in the United States is unconscionable. The federal government, in partnership with Tribal Nations, must do more to address this crisis. This includes ensuring that the federal government and others are tracking and coordinating response to crimes, and that Tribal Nations are able access the tools necessary to prevent these tragedies.

Savanna's Act is designed to enhance the use of crime databases, increase cooperation and standardization across law enforcement agencies with overlapping jurisdiction, and facilitate gathering data on missing and murdered Native people in furtherance of the United States' trust responsibility to provide

¹ USET SPF member Tribal Nations include: Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas (TX), Aroostook Band of Micmac Indians (ME), Catawba Indian Nation (SC), Cayuga Nation (NY), Chickahominy Indian Tribe (VA), Chickahominy Indian Tribe – Eastern Division (VA), Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (NC), Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians (ME), Jena Band of Choctaw Indians (LA), Mashantucket Pequot Indian Tribe (CT), Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe (MA), Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida (FL), Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MS), Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut (CT), Narragansett Indian Tribe (RI), Oneida Indian Nation (NY), Pamunkey Indian Tribe (VA), Passamaquoddy Tribe at Indian Township (ME), Passamaquoddy Tribe at Pleasant Point (ME), Penobscot Indian Nation (ME), Poarch Band of Creek Indians (AL), Rappahannock Tribe (VA), Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe (NY), Seminole Tribe of Florida (FL), Seneca Nation of Indians (NY), Shinnecock Indian Nation (NY), Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana (LA), and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) (MA).

the resources necessary to keep our people safe. This includes requiring the Department of Justice (DOJ) to collect information related to missing and murdered Native people, as well as increase the prosecution of crimes occurring in Indian Country. DOJ would also be directed to develop, in consultation with Tribal Nations, standardized guidelines for responding to cases of missing and murdered Native people.

The Not Invisible Act would increase coordination within the federal government in furtherance of the United States' trust responsibility and obligations to provide for public safety in Indian Country. It would also provide a mechanism for Tribal Nations, Native people, and others with relevant expertise to advise the federal government on combatting violent crime within Indian Country and against Native people, addressing some of the historical trauma that leads to crime in Indian Country.

USET SPF supports both Savanna's Act and the Not Invisible Act as critical steps toward more fully delivering upon the trust obligation to Tribal Nations and recognizing our inherent sovereign authority. While we call upon this Congress to take up and pass this important legislation, we strongly urge this Committee to consider how it might take action to fully recognize Tribal criminal jurisdiction over all persons and activities in our homelands for all Tribal Nations. Thank you for your consideration of this request. Should you have any questions or require further information, please contact Ms. Liz Malerba, USET SPF Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs, at LMalerba@usetinc.org or 202-624-3550.

Sincerely,



Kirk Francis
President



Kitcki A. Carroll
Executive Director