



# USET

SOVEREIGNTY PROTECTION FUND

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July 14, 2020

The Honorable James P. McGovern  
Chair of the House Rules Committee  
408 Cannon, House Office Building  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Thomas J. Cole  
Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee  
2207 Rayburn, House Office Building  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman McGovern and Ranking Member Cole,

On behalf of the United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF), we are grateful that H.R. 759, the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo and Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas Equal and Fair Opportunity Settlement Act, unanimously passed the House earlier in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress. While the Senate has yet to act on this important legislation, a bipartisan group of Representatives, including Representative Escobar, are seeking to add the language to H.R. 6395, the William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021. We respectfully request your support for Amendment 681 offered by Representatives Escobar, Babin, Gallego, Hurd and Cardenas.

USET SPF is a non-profit, inter-tribal organization advocating on behalf of 30 federally recognized Tribal Nations from the Northeastern Woodlands to the Everglades and across the Gulf of Mexico<sup>1</sup>. USET SPF is dedicated to promoting, protecting, and advancing the inherent sovereign rights and authorities of Tribal Nations, and assisting our membership in dealing effectively with public policy issues.

In March 2019, during the USET SPF 2019 Impact Week Meetings, we passed a resolution in support of H.R. 759 to ensure the protection of Tribal sovereignty and self-governance; a copy of the Resolution is attached hereto as Exhibit 1. The passage of H.R. 759 is vital to the continued economic development and health of the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo and Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas. It is estimated that the total economic impact for the passage of H.R. 759 would be \$645 million in and around El Paso and Livingston, Texas. At a time when the novel coronavirus has caused major economic harm in Indian Country and in the Tribal Nations' surrounding communities, the passage of H.R. 759 would facilitate the hiring and retention of well over 1,700 jobs at no cost to the federal government.

As you know, there is precedent for the consideration of Tribal bills in the annual National Defense Authorization Act, including several provisions included as recently as last year. H.R. 759 has wide-spread,

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<sup>1</sup> 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).

bipartisan support and several co-sponsors sit on the House Armed Services Committee. We also understand that House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Raul Grijalva has expressed his support for the amendment to Rules and Armed Services leadership.

Again, we appreciate your leadership and support for Indian Country. We would be grateful for your consideration of the inclusion of H.R. 759 within H.R. 6395.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Francis", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Chief Kirk E. Francis, Sr.  
President

c:     The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
          Speaker of the House of Representatives

          The Honorable Steny Hoyer  
          Majority Leader, House of Representatives

          The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
          Minority Leader, House of Representatives