



# USET

SOVEREIGNTY PROTECTION FUND

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*Transmitted electronically*

September 12, 2025

Representative Bruce Westerman  
Chairman  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative Jared Huffman  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
1332 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

**Re: Need for Swift Passage of the H.R. 5257 – The Tribal Trust Land Reaffirmation Act**

Dear Chairman Westerman and Ranking Member Huffman,

On behalf of United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF), we write in strong support of H.R. 5257, the Tribal Trust Land Reaffirmation Act, introduced by Representatives Cole, McCollum, Rogers, and Huffman. This bill would reaffirm the status of lands currently held in trust by the United States for federally recognized Tribal Nations. We respectfully request your assistance in ensuring that this legislation receives action as quickly as possible this Congress. By reaffirming the status of existing trust lands, this bill would protect our homelands from frivolous litigation and ensure that there is legal certainty of the trust status of these lands.

It has been more than 16 years since the devastating U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Carcieri v. Salazar*, which ruled that only Tribal Nations “under federal jurisdiction” in 1934 are eligible for the Indian Reorganization Act’s land-into-trust provisions. This erroneous ruling jeopardizes the ability of federally recognized Tribal Nations to rebuild our communities and provide essential governmental programs, as Tribal land bases are the very foundation of Tribal sovereignty and strong economies. We are seeing sustained efforts aimed at eroding Tribal sovereignty due to the *Carcieri* decision and ensuing cases.

Numerous legal cases stem from the *Carcieri* decision, some of which have threatened Tribal lands that have been in trust for decades. The *Carcieri* decision has generated – and will continue to generate if unaddressed – substantial litigation over existing trust lands where the United States, at taxpayer expense, is the defendant. These lawsuits jeopardize not only Tribal governmental programs but also hinder economic development. The prospects of costly, protracted litigation have deterred many potential partners and investors for reservation economic development projects and continue to stifle job creation in Indian Country.

Tribal Nations have consistently expressed that fixing the wrongful decision in *Carcieri v. Salazar* necessarily includes two components: (1) a restoration to the Secretary’s authority to take land into trust for all Tribal Nations; and (2) a reaffirmation of existing Tribal government trust lands. As challenges to land already in trust have mushroomed following the *Carcieri* decision, USET SPF recognizes that the Tribal

*Because there is Strength in Unity*

Trust Land Reaffirmation Act is critically necessary to stop these legal challenges that seek to erode and dismantle Tribal sovereign authorities and rights. We thank you for your consideration of this request and look forward to working with you on this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

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

Chief Kirk Francis  
President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kitcki A. Carroll", with a stylized, cursive script.

Kitcki A. Carroll  
Executive Director