

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

R. BRUCE JOSTEN
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

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June 19, 2014

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Republican Leader McConnell:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business federation representing the interests of more than three million businesses of all sizes, sectors, and regions, as well as state and local chambers and industry associations, and dedicated to promoting, protecting and defending America's free enterprise system, urges you to take up important legislation central to economic development in Indian country.

The Chamber established the Native American Enterprise Initiative (NAEI) in recognition of the revolution in entrepreneurship occurring amongst the nearly three million people of American Indian and Alaskan Native heritage. Drawing on the Chamber's record of business advocacy, the NAEI seeks to remove legislative and regulatory roadblocks to their economic success.

Recently, two bipartisan bills were ordered to be reported favorably from the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs that offer positive steps toward providing economic opportunity in Indian country: S. 2132, the "Indian Tribal Energy Development and Self-Determination Act Amendments of 2014," and S. 2188, "A bill to amend the Act of June 18, 1934, to reaffirm the authority of the Secretary of the Interior to take land into trust for Indian tribes." S. 2132 would, among other things, streamline the process for Secretarial approval of tribal energy resource agreements, bolstering tribal sovereignty and self-determination. S. 2188 would address the 2009 Supreme Court decision in *Carcieri v. Salazar*, which triggered negative impacts still being felt by tribes across the country – delaying, and perhaps denying, tribes and surrounding communities the benefits of economic development projects whose success requires trust land as a necessary element.

Additionally, three other bills await action in committees of jurisdiction:

- S. 1507, the "Tribal General Welfare Exclusion Act of 2013," which would clarify in statute the application of general welfare benefits in Indian country and provide for the establishment of a national "Tribal Advisory Committee" within the Department of the Treasury that would work towards establishing a training and education program for

individuals within the IRS who administer and enforce internal revenue laws in Indian country;

- S. 165, the “Indian Trust Asset Reform Act,” which would build on experience learned from the passage of the HEARTH Act and the TERA provision in the Energy Policy Act of 2005 to authorize Indian tribes to apply their own laws to any or all trust asset management within their jurisdictions, to reduce excessive federal burdens and delays that inhibit economic development in tribal communities; and
- S. 1477, the “Tribal Labor Sovereignty Act of 2013,” which would prevent an unnecessary and unproductive overreach by the National Labor Relations Board into the sovereign jurisdiction of tribal governments. By amending the National Labor Relations Act to accord tribal governments the same treatment as other government entities, S. 1477 would provide certainty and clarity to ensure that tribal governmental statutes concerning labor relations would remain intact.

Together, these five bills represent important and positive steps toward removing legislative roadblocks to economic success in Indian country, and would help affirm tribal sovereignty, economic development, and self-determination. The Chamber requests that S. 2188 and S. 2132 be considered by the full Senate, and that the committees of jurisdiction mark up and report S. 1507, S. 165, and S. 1477 to the full Senate for their consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Bruce Josten", written in a cursive style.

R. Bruce Josten

cc: Members of the United States Senate