



United States Congressman — First District, Nebraska

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**House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on National
Parks, Forests, and Public Lands**

May 22, 2019

***H.R. 2490—To amend the National Trails Systems Act to direct the
Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study on the feasibility of
designating the Chief Standing Bear National Historic Trail, and for
other purposes***

Thank you, Chairwoman Haaland, Ranking Member Young, and
members of the Subcommittee.

Noⁿbe-t^he wíuga-the eóⁿkigoⁿzhi: Our hands are not the same color

Zhákihi-ke oⁿníye-tamiⁿk^he: If I pierce mine, I will feel pain.

Noⁿbé-the zháthakihi-ki thiníye-taniⁿkshe: If you pierce your hand, you
will feel pain.

Wamí-ak^ha nóⁿgai-t^he-di-ki wíuga eóⁿkigoⁿ-taóⁿgat^hoⁿ: When the blood flows, it will be the same color.

Nú bthiⁿ: I am a man.

Wakóⁿda-ak^ha ékigoⁿ waxa: God made us the same.

These immortal words of Ponca leader Chief Standing Bear allowed Native Americans to be recognized as fully human. Madam Chair, it's hard to imagine any of us here, let alone any human being, let alone a person who had endured such deep emotional, physical, and spiritual suffering, to possess the calm and courageous state of mind to utter such wisdom. If we pause for just a minute and let these words sink in, we find how powerfully, directly, and poignantly they speak to us today.

Madam Chair, Chief Standing Bear is speaking to us right now, right here in this chamber, about human dignity. The worth of a person. The bonds of love, and blood, and purpose that bind us all together. I stand here before you with a simple request: to approve a trail in his honor. This trail will not take lands, alter boundaries, intrude on any American in any way. Like Standing Bear himself, it simply lays down a symbolic marker for justice and the possibility of a more humane future for the Ponca people and all Native Americans.