

OPENING STATEMENT

Good morning to you all, and a warm welcome to all our witnesses here today.

Today we will be examining four pieces of legislation that continue our commitment to tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

First, H.R. 2414, introduced by Chairman Grijalva, will reauthorize and amend the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation Act.

The Udall Foundation conducts research and provides training to Native American and Alaska Native leaders on health care issues and tribal public policy through the Native Nations Institute for Leadership, Management, and Policy.

It also operates the Parks in Focus program to provide opportunities for youth to experience our Nation's parks and wilderness, and houses the successful U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution.

In 2012, the leadership of the Udall Foundation worked closely with the Government Accountability Office and the Inspector General at the Department of the Interior to conduct thorough reviews of every program to ensure proper stewardship of the Foundation.

Earlier last year, GAO and the OIG-DOI found that the Foundation is operating with all the necessary internal controls and made recommendations on how to better reflect the mission and goals of the Foundation.

H.R. 2414 will implement those changes and allow the Foundation to continue its great work.

H.R. 2031, the *PROGRESS for Indian Tribes Act*, introduced by our colleague from New Mexico Ms. Haaland, will streamline the Department of the Interior's self-governance process and provide Indian tribes with greater flexibility.

Pursuant to the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, tribes are able to enter into self-governance compacts - commonly known as "638 contracts" - with BIA and IHS to manage and administer federal Indian programs.

Most self-governance tribes manage programs within both IHS and DOI and have achieved great success.

However, significant differences between the conditions for DOI contracts and IHS contracts have forced tribes to operate under two separate sets of legislative and administrative requirements.

H.R. 2031 will reconcile these differences in order to streamline the entire self-governance process.

H.R. 895, the *Tribal School Federal Insurance Parity Act*, introduced by Mr. Johnson of South Dakota, amends the Indian Health Care Improvement Act to restore parity to health benefits at BIE-operated and BIE-funded tribally operated schools

Currently, all BIE-operated schools, as well as four BIE-funded tribally operated schools, participate in the Federal Employee Health Benefit program.

However, this eligibility was not extended to tribally-controlled schools operating under the Tribally Controlled Schools Act.

This has resulted in significant financial strains on those schools, as well as difficulty in recruiting quality educators.

H.R. 895 would end this two-tiered system for Federal Employee Health Benefits at BIE schools.

Finally, we will consider H.R. 396, introduced by Mr. Mullin from Oklahoma.

H.R. 396 would permanently resolve the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma's long-standing land claim to the Wabash River watershed in east-central Illinois.

The Miami Tribe's ancestral homelands are located south of the Great Lakes, in the states of Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio.

Like many tribes, the Miami were ripped from these homelands and forcibly relocated in the late 1800s – first to Kansas and then to Oklahoma, where they reside today.

Prior to being relocated, the Miami was a signatory to the Treaty of Grouseland in 1805.

Article IV of that Treaty made clear that the Tribe possessed approximately 2.6 million acres in the Wabash River watershed, and the United States agreed it would not take any part of that watershed without the consent of the tribal signatories.

However, over time, the United States placed the land in the public domain and transferred it to settlers without the consent of the Miami Tribe or the other signatories, violating the Treaty.

H.R 396 extinguishes the Tribe's claim to the Illinois land in exchange for a one-year window for the Tribe to bring its case before the United States Court of Federal Claims.

Additionally, the bill would eliminate any cloud on title that exists for current landowners in the Wabash watershed lands.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on these important bills today, and I now recognize Ranking Member Cook for his opening remarks.