

## GALLEGO OPENING STATEMENT

Good morning to you all.

Today, we will be hearing directly from the Trump administration about steps it is taking to confront the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.

Earlier this year, this Subcommittee held a hearing where we heard from Native women who have witnessed this crisis firsthand, and who are working on the ground to address it.

I want to thank the Ranking Member for agreeing to look further into this issue in a bipartisan manner. I think I speak for us both when I say how important it is to keep this issue in the spotlight.

Before we begin today's hearing, I want to remind everyone why we are here.

During our March MMIW hearing, we heard their names:

- Ashley Loring HeavyRunner,
- Mackenzie Howard,
- Ashlynne Mike, and
- Savanna Greywind.

They are Native women and girls who went missing or were killed, and whose cases received shamefully negligent responses from federal and state agencies.

Unfortunately these women were not alone, and their cases are not unique.

One study found that 1.5 million American Indian and Alaska Native women experience violence in their lifetime.

On reservations, American Indian and Alaska Native women experience murder rates 10 times the national average.

And, as we learned at our hearing earlier this year, these numbers are likely underreported.

We also know that state, local, and federal coordination and response to cases of violence against Indigenous communities is severely inadequate.

In fact, federal enforcement has been so notoriously bad that some predators specifically target Native communities to avoid punishment.

This pattern is sickening.

These high rates of violence are not just a crisis affecting Indian Country.

It is a national disgrace that demands national action – action that has not appeared to be a high priority for this administration.

We in Congress are committed to making change – through VAWA, Savanna’s Act and other legislation – but we need to know we have a partner in the administration in working to curb the violence.

Listening sessions are not enough.

We need to know what is being done to streamline protocols, eliminate lag time, improve databases, and combat apathy in our justice system when Indigenous people go missing.

These are our brothers and sisters, whom we have a responsibility to protect.

I want to remind our witnesses here that the policies we discuss today have a direct impact on the lives of folks on the ground – for better or worse.

I expect to hear about the tangible solutions this administration is pursuing to end this cycle of violence for Indigenous women in this country.

Anything less is unacceptable.

I now would like to recognize the Ranking Member, Mr. Cook, for his opening statement.