



*SCIP Oversight Hearing titled “Environmental Justice in Indigenous Communities.”*

*5.13.21*

OPENING STATEMENT

Thank you, Madam Chair and thank you to the witnesses for being with us today.

Out of respect for the special status of Indian tribes, the United States and its agencies consult with Indian tribes on proposed actions that may affect their interests.

This obligation was formalized in Executive Order 13175 in 2000, which contained instructions for agencies to establish procedures to ensure “meaningful consultation and collaboration with tribal officials in the development of Federal policies that have tribal implications, to strengthen the United States government-to-government relationships with Indian tribes.

Tribal consultation is key to ensuring that tribes are heard during federal actions.



The effectiveness of Tribal consultation often varies from case to case, often depending on the efforts of local agency officials.

Whether this process could be improved is certainly worth discussing, however, I do have some concern those on the other side of the aisle are aim to use Environmental Justice as a way to create new environmental mandates, processes, and regulations that will stifle energy and infrastructure development and drive up energy costs for Americans and tribal communities that are already energy starved.

Using Environmental Justice to increase regulations and procedures will result in more infrastructure being shut down and less coming online.

Additionally, it could also hinder clean energy development on tribal lands and deplete critical sources of conservation funding that improve the environment.

Instead, we must work together to invest in innovation and streamline energy and infrastructure development for those tribes that wish to develop those resources.

This will allow tribes to benefit from the jobs and other economic benefits provided by these projects.

For example, current development of natural resources on tribal lands can help pay for education, health care, culture and language preservation and other essential tribal programs.

Moreover, cutting red tape to allow for tribal economic development is a better option than paying people not to work which is what the current administration seems committed to doing.

Rather than shackle economic development on tribal land, Congress should examine innovative ways to responsibly utilize domestic energy supplies while improving conditions within tribal communities.

We *can* have these jobs and protect the environment at the same time.

For example, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, who is with us here today, has partnered with 8 Rivers Capital, LLC to develop the Coyote Clean Power Project, locating one of the world's first zero-emissions NET Power natural gas-fired power plants within their reservation.

The Coyote Clean Power Project will produce 280 MW of clean power 24/7, while capturing and storing CO2.

This is the perfect example of innovation we should be fostering.

I believe we have an obligation to leave this world better than we found it and reject the premise that a healthy environment and a strong economy are mutually exclusive.

That's why Republicans are taking thoughtful, scientific, decisive action on environmental policies. I hope to see even more of my Democrat colleagues join us in these efforts.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses to identify how we can help get the government out of the way to allow Tribal communities to thrive.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

I yield back.