

OPENING STATEMENT

- Today's oversight topic highlights one of the Committee's priorities—Indigenous cultural protection and preservation.
- As the witnesses will share today, many Indigenous cultural preservation efforts are community-led.
- As Members of Congress, we can work together to strengthen these movements by passing legislation that upholds their intent.
- That's why I am prioritizing the codification of legislation that upholds tribal sovereignty on cultural protection and preservation issues.
- Earlier this year, I introduced my RESPECT Act, a bill establishing mandatory tribal consultation procedures on the federal level.
- When tribal cultural and environmental protection issues are on the line, tribal leaders will have an equitable seat at the table with the RESPECT Act in law.
- I am also reviewing legislative updates to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act—

NAGPRA—and the National Historic Preservation Act—NHPA.

- Both were enacted to protect cultural and historic preservation, yet decades later, many loopholes remain in each process' implementation—often to the high cost of tribal communities.
- I hope to ensure that tribal governments and organizations have the support they need to protect and repatriate cultural heritage by amending these statutes.
- Lastly, our Subcommittee Chair has also introduced the STOP Act, which will prevent the illegal trafficking of tribal cultural patrimony.
- I am pleased to share that this bill passed through our Committee markup earlier this month as a bipartisan effort.
- Overall, promoting Indigenous culture and sovereignty will help strengthen Indigenous communities for generations to come.
- I look forward to hearing the witness testimony and working with our Members to ensure that these priorities make it to the finish line.