

Testimony of Wena Supernaw
Chairwoman, Quapaw Nation
U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources
November 19, 2025

On H.R. 5696 — *The STREAMLINE Act: Strengthening Tribal Real Estate Authority and Modernizing Land for Indigenous Nation Expansion Act*

Chairman Westerman, Chairman Hurd, Ranking Member Huffman, Ranking Member Leger Fernandez, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the Quapaw Nation. I am honored to appear before you in support of H.R. 5696, the STREAMLINE ACT.

Fifty years ago, President Nixon urged Congress to end the paternalism that defined federal-tribal relations. Your predecessors in Congress responded by passing the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975, which authorized tribes to take control of programs and services that had previously been run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Indian Health Service.

Today, that vote of trust in tribal capacity has created a foundational shift in the federal-tribal relationship.

The Quapaw Nation now exercises self-governance over 21 BIA functions, virtually every program for which we are eligible. For us, self-governance is not merely a management decision—it is economic development. Every contract, audit, and report we complete builds technical skills among our citizens. Every federal program we operate becomes an opportunity to express our own sovereignty.

As I told this Committee several months ago, when we moved to self-governance, my tribe stopped being dependent on the federal government. Instead, we became a partner to the United States. Our mindset shifted as well. We went from “what will Washington do for us next?” to “what can we do to help our people next?” That change in mindset created the foundation for our success in commercial enterprises, environmental-cleanup capacity, and our growing professional workforce.

For all that progress, President Nixon’s dream is still unfinished. There remain areas where federal bureaucracy still slows us down. At the Quapaw Nation, the management of land and natural-resource transactions is one of those areas.

Even when tribes have compacted realty and land-management programs under Title IV of ISDEAA, the Department of the Interior still requires many of our transactions to secure an approved appraisal by the Appraisal and Valuation Services Office (AVSO). In practice, that means a tribe like ours cannot even conduct an independent valuation of our reservation land without a BIA appraisal or BIA signing off on the 3rd party appraisers we use. With only one BIA approved appraiser in Eastern Oklahoma, that means we have had projects sit idle for half a year while we wait for AVSO to conduct an analysis we could have done ourselves in 24 hours.

That is not a trust safeguard; it's a bottleneck. It delays investment, agriculture leasing, homebuilding, and environmental restoration across Indian Country. I am so grateful that Congressman LaMalfa recognized this and was willing to work with our tribe to build on the legacy of the Self Determination Act and give tribes the ability to further empower our governments.

As I mentioned at the field hearing in Oklahoma City, the Quapaw Nation has taken responsibility for our land for nearly a generation. When we assumed self-governance, we compacted our realty and trust services, which allowed us to manage our land efficiently and transparently.

Congressman LaMalfa's STREAMLINE Act can supercharge our ability to use Self-Governance. Tribes with compacted realty programs have proven that we can apply federal standards with professionalism and integrity. What we need is legal recognition of that capacity, so we can act without long waits for limited federal staff.

H.R. 5696 codifies what experience has already shown: when tribes manage their own realty functions, the United States fulfills its trust responsibility more effectively. Under the bill, if a tribe has demonstrated capacity and adheres to the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP) or equivalent standards, the Secretary must accept a tribal valuation in place of a federal appraisal.

For the Quapaw Nation, time is not just money—it's opportunity. Every delay in approving a lease, a right-of-way, or an exchange is a lost month of revenue, a postponed construction season, or an investor who moves on.

By trusting tribes to perform their own valuations, Congress will:

- Shorten project timelines from weeks to months;
- Reduce AVSO's workload, freeing federal staff for higher priority projects; and
- Encourage more tribes to compact realty and trust functions under Title IV;

These reforms likely cost nothing, require no new bureaucracy, and will materially accelerate economic activity in Indian Country.

I want to close by both acknowledging the work that went into the hearing, and the work that is still to come.

This hearing gives us the opportunity to reflect on ways to strengthen and improve the STREAMLINE ACT. One idea is to consider the burden that all appraisals place on tribes and the BIA, not just those in the Land Consolidation and Fee to Trust context. And, I hope this hearing gives us the opportunity to seek additional input and changes from the Department of the Interior, NCAI, Self Gov and others to make sure the intent of this bill—empowering tribal governments to conduct our own appraisals—can come to fruition.

Thank you again, Chairman, Ranking Member, for the opportunity to be here today. I look forward to working with you on this legislation, and other priority bills for the Quapaw Nation

including H.R. 1451, the Quapaw Tribal Settlement Act of 2025 which is so important for my community.