



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
**NATURAL RESOURCES**  
CHAIRMAN BRUCE WESTERMAN

**To:** Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs Republican Members  
**From:** Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs Staff: Kirstin Liddell  
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**Date:** Monday, March 2, 2026  
**Subject:** Legislative Hearing on 3 Bills

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The Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs will hold a legislative hearing on three bills: H.R. 2827 (Rep. Cole), To provide for the equitable settlement of certain Indian land disputes regarding land in Illinois, and for other purposes.; H.R. 6162 (Rep. Stansbury), “*Albuquerque Indian School Act of 2025*”; and H.R. 7065 (Rep. Langworthy), “*Seneca Nation Law Enforcement Efficiency Act*”.

The hearing will take place on **Wednesday, March 4, 2026, at 10:15 a.m., in room 1324 Longworth House Office Building.**

Member offices are requested to notify Seneca Feys ([Seneca.Feys@mail.house.gov](mailto:Seneca.Feys@mail.house.gov)) by 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 3, 2026, if their Member intends to participate in the hearing.

## **I. KEY MESSAGES**

- H.R. 2827, a bill to provide for the equitable settlement of certain Indian land disputes regarding land in Illinois, and for other purposes, and H.R. 7065, the “Seneca Nation Law Enforcement Efficiency Act,” support tribal sovereignty and self-determination.
- H.R. 2827 clears title for Illinois landowners, protects private property rights, and gives the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma a final opportunity to have its treaty-based claim heard in court.
- H.R. 7065 removes the State of New York’s jurisdiction over offenses by or against the Seneca Nation of Indians, returning jurisdiction to the federal government and the Seneca Nation.
- H.R. 6162 places approximately 9.89 acres into trust for the benefit of the 19 Pueblos of New Mexico.

## II. WITNESSES

### Panel I (Members of Congress)

- *To Be Announced*

### Panel II (Administration Witnesses)

- **Mr. Bryan Mercier**, Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. [H.R. 2827, H.R. 6162, and H.R. 7065]

### Panel III (Outside Experts)

- **The Hon. Douglas Lankford**, Chief, Miami Tribe of Oklahoma, Miami, OK [H.R. 2827]
- **The Hon. J. C. Seneca**, President, Seneca Nation of Indians, Irving, NY [H.R. 7065]
- **Ms. Monique Fragua**, President and CEO, Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, Albuquerque, NM [H.R. 6162] (*Minority Witness*)

## III. BACKGROUND

### [H.R. 2827 \(Rep. Cole\), To provide for the equitable settlement of certain Indian land disputes regarding land in Illinois, and for other purposes.](#)

The Miami Tribe of Oklahoma (Miami) is a federally recognized Indian tribe originally based in the Great Lakes and Midwest region, including parts of modern-day Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Illinois.<sup>1</sup> U.S. territorial expansion progressively reduced Miami landholdings through a series of treaties in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>2</sup>

The 1805 Treaty of Grouseland recognized Miami title to lands in the Wabash River watershed, which extends across Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio, and provided that the U.S. would not purchase portions of that territory without tribal consent.<sup>3</sup> In the decades that followed, however, additional treaties and federal policies led to large-scale cessions of Miami land. By 1846, most of the Miami population was removed to areas west of the Mississippi River pursuant to federal removal policies; descendants of those removed westward now constitute the Miami population in Oklahoma.<sup>4</sup>

Lands in east-central Illinois, part of the historic Miami homeland referenced in the 1805 treaty, were subsequently patented to non-Native settlers. Those patents were issued without proper extinguishment of tribal title, forming the basis of the Miami's treaty-based claim.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tiller, Veronica E. Velarde, TILLER'S GUIDE TO INDIAN COUNTRY: ECONOMIC PROFILES OF AMERICAN INDIAN RESERVATIONS, (3rd ed. 2006), pg. 634.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> 1805 Treaty of Grouseland, August 21, 1805, 7 Stat. 91, available at <https://treaties.okstate.edu/treaties/treaty-with-the-delawares-etc-1805-0080>.

<sup>4</sup> Tiller, Veronica E. Velarde, TILLER'S GUIDE TO INDIAN COUNTRY: ECONOMIC PROFILES OF AMERICAN INDIAN RESERVATIONS, (3rd ed. 2006), pg. 634.

<sup>5</sup> "Miami Tribe of Oklahoma Land Claim Bill," House Committee on Natural Resources, [https://republicans-naturalresources.house.gov/UploadedFiles/Miami\\_Tribe\\_of\\_OK\\_Land\\_Bill\\_One-Page.pdf](https://republicans-naturalresources.house.gov/UploadedFiles/Miami_Tribe_of_OK_Land_Bill_One-Page.pdf).

Congress enacted the Indian Claims Commission Act (ICCA) in 1946, which established the Indian Claims Commission (ICC) to provide a forum for tribes seeking monetary compensation for claims against the U.S. that predate August 13, 1946.<sup>6</sup> The ICC did not restore land; rather, it awarded money damages, calculated as the value of land at the time of taking.<sup>7</sup> Section 12 of the ICCA required that such claims be filed within five years of enactment and barred late-filed claims to achieve finality.<sup>8</sup> The ICCA ceased operations in 1978, and remaining matters were transferred to the U.S. Court of Federal Claims.<sup>9</sup>

The Miami participated in the ICC process for other claims but did not file the Illinois land claim during the ICCA filing window (1946–1951). The tribe declined to pursue the claim before the ICC because that forum provided only monetary compensation and would have extinguished the underlying land claim. At the time, the Miami preferred return of the lands to a cash award.<sup>10</sup>

In 2000, the Miami filed suit in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Illinois against private landowners, asserting treaty-based rights associated with approximately 2.6 million acres in east-central Illinois.<sup>11</sup> The court did not rule on the merits of the land claim, and the tribe voluntarily dismissed the case without prejudice in 2001, precluding issuance of a dispositive ruling.<sup>12</sup> Although the case was withdrawn, the treaty-based claim remains unresolved because it has never been adjudicated or extinguished. Absent congressional action extinguishing the land claim, the asserted title interest continues to create uncertainty for current landowners and lenders.<sup>13</sup>

H.R. 2827, introduced by Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK-04), confers jurisdiction to the U.S. Court of Federal Claims to hear this single treaty-based damages claim brought by the Miami notwithstanding statutes of limitation and other delay-based defenses. This jurisdiction expires unless the tribe brings the claim no later than one year after the bill's enactment. The bill authorizes only monetary relief against the U.S. and precludes any equitable relief or recovery against private landowners. In exchange, it permanently extinguishes all of the Miami's remaining land and title claims to the specified Illinois lands. The Illinois Farm Bureau, representing affected landowners, supports the bill, stating that it would permanently clear title and hold private landowners harmless.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Indian Claims Commission Act, Pub. L. No. 79-726; 60 Stat. 1049 (August 13, 1946).

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> Act of Oct. 8, 1976, Pub. L. No. 94-465

<sup>10</sup> Discussion between the Miami and House Committee on Natural Resources Staff, December 18, 2025.

<sup>11</sup> *Miami Tribe v. Walden*, 206 F.R.D. 238 (S.D. Ill. 2001).

<sup>12</sup> "Miami tribe drops Illinois land lawsuit," *The Oklahoman*, June 15, 2001, <https://www.oklahoman.com/story/news/2001/06/15/miami-tribe-drops-illinois-land-lawsuit/62142643007/>.

<sup>13</sup> H. Rept. 117-597, at 2.

<sup>14</sup> "Joint statement of the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma and Illinois Farm Bureau on H.R. 5831 and S. 2796. October 4, 2023," House Natural Resources Committee, [https://republicans-naturalresources.house.gov/UploadedFiles/Joint\\_statement\\_of\\_the\\_Miami\\_Tribe\\_of\\_Oklahoma\\_and\\_IFB\\_10.04.2023.pdf](https://republicans-naturalresources.house.gov/UploadedFiles/Joint_statement_of_the_Miami_Tribe_of_Oklahoma_and_IFB_10.04.2023.pdf).

### **H.R. 6162 (Rep. Stansbury), “Albuquerque Indian School Act of 2025”**

There are 19 Pueblo tribes in New Mexico, each of which is a sovereign nation: the Acoma, Cochiti, Isleta, Jemez, Laguna, Nambé, Ohkay Owingeh, Picuris, Pojoaque, Sandia, San Felipe, San Ildefonso, Santa Ana, Santa Clara, Santo Domingo, Taos, Tesuque, Zia, and Zuni.<sup>15</sup> Although the Pueblo people predominantly reside in New Mexico today, their historic homeland extended into Colorado and Arizona.<sup>16</sup>

H.R. 6162, would transfer approximately 9.89 acres of land from the General Services Administration into trust for the 19 Pueblos of New Mexico.<sup>17</sup> The land transfer contains three tracts of land formerly used by the Albuquerque Indian School,<sup>18</sup> which operated from 1881-1981.<sup>19</sup> The bill directs the 19 Pueblos to utilize the land for educational and cultural purposes, as well as economic development.<sup>20</sup> This legislation is supported by the All Pueblo Council of Governors, the Albuquerque City Council, the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce, and various local officials.<sup>21</sup>

H.R. 6162 continues the 19 Pueblos’ efforts to consolidate parcels of the former Albuquerque Indian School, which hold significant cultural and historical value. The legislation includes an explicit prohibition on all classes of gaming under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act.

### **H.R. 7065 (Rep. Langworthy), “Seneca Nation Law Enforcement Efficiency Act”**

The Seneca Nation of Indians (Seneca Nation) is a federally recognized tribe located in New York State.<sup>22</sup> As a founding member of Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy,<sup>23</sup> the Seneca Nation is part of one of the oldest recognized democracies predating the U.S.<sup>24</sup>

In 1948, Congress transferred criminal jurisdiction over all Indian Tribes in the State of New York to the state, significantly limiting the Seneca Nation’s sovereignty and its ability to address crime on the reservation.<sup>25</sup> The Seneca Nation’s Allegany Territory is situated along a known drug trafficking route between the Great Lakes, Pittsburgh, and New York City. Increased drug trafficking has led to higher crime rates throughout the Seneca Nation. Unfortunately, the jurisdictional patchwork created by the 1948 law has been exploited by criminals. Under the 1948 law, the federal government retains criminal jurisdiction over major offenses committed by tribal members on tribal lands. However, New York State’s overarching criminal jurisdiction has limited the federal government’s law enforcement presence.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> “The 19 Pueblos of New Mexico,” Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, <https://indianpueblo.org/new-mexicos-19-pueblos/>.

<sup>16</sup> *Id.*

<sup>17</sup> *Albuquerque Indian School Act of 2025*, One Pager, The Office of Melanie Stansbury. On file.

<sup>18</sup> Letters of Support for H.R. 6162. On file.

<sup>19</sup> Sabatini, Joe, “A History of the Cemetery at the Albuquerque Indian School,” Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, September 24, 2017, [https://www.cabq.gov/parksandrecreation/documents/history-of-ais-cemetery\\_sabatini\\_joe.pdf](https://www.cabq.gov/parksandrecreation/documents/history-of-ais-cemetery_sabatini_joe.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> Letters of Support for H.R. 6162. On file.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

<sup>22</sup> Tiller, Veronica E. Velarde, *TILLER’S GUIDE TO INDIAN COUNTRY: ECONOMIC PROFILES OF AMERICAN INDIAN RESERVATIONS*, (3rd ed. 2006), pg. 575.

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

<sup>24</sup> *Id.*

<sup>25</sup> 25 U.S.C. § 232.

<sup>26</sup> One Pager on H.R. 7065. On file.

The Seneca Nation believes that coordination between the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) law enforcement and their own law enforcement personnel would improve public safety outcomes, rather than continuing the current patchwork system of state and federal jurisdictions.

In July 2025, the Seneca Nation engaged the Department of the Interior, the BIA's Office of Justice Services, and the Department of Justice at a public safety summit. All parties involved agreed that the status quo is not working and is undermining public safety. Since that meeting, the Seneca Nation and the BIA's Office of Justice Services have worked together to implement federal training for the Seneca Nation's public safety officials.<sup>27</sup> Despite this positive progress, the 1948 law continues to be an impediment.

H.R. 7065, introduced by Rep. Nicholas Langworthy (R-NY-23), would allow the Seneca Nation, upon written agreement with the U.S. Attorney General, to be exempt from the 1948 law transferring criminal jurisdiction to New York State, improving public safety in and around the Seneca Nation.

#### **IV. MAJOR PROVISIONS & SECTION-BY-SECTION**

##### **[H.R. 2827 \(Rep. Cole\), To provide for the equitable settlement of certain Indian land disputes regarding land in Illinois, and for other purposes.](#)**

###### **Section 1. Settlement of Claims**

- Grants the U.S. Court of Federal Claims exclusive, time-limited jurisdiction to hear a treaty-based monetary claim brought by the Miami relating to certain lands in Illinois.
- Waives statutes of limitation and delay-based defenses for that claim and permanently extinguishes all other land and title claims of the Miami to the specified Illinois lands.

##### **[H.R. 6162 \(Rep. Stansbury\), "Albuquerque Indian School Act of 2025"](#)**

###### **Section 2. Transfer of Land into Trust for the 19 Pueblos.**

- Directs the Administrator of General Services to transfer approximately 9.89 acres of federal land into trust for the 19 Pueblos through the Secretary of the Interior
- Requires the land to be used for the educational, health, cultural, business, and economic development of the 19 Pueblos.
- Prohibits gaming on the transferred land, pursuant to the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act.

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<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

**H.R. 7065 (Rep. Langworthy), “Seneca Nation Law Enforcement Efficiency Act”**

**Section 2. Nullification of Effect of Law.**

- Establishes that, at the written concurrence of the U.S. Attorney General and the Seneca Nation, the jurisdiction granted to the State of New York under 25 U.S.C. § 232 shall not apply to the reservations of the Seneca Nation.

**V. CBO COST ESTIMATE**

A formal cost estimate from the Congressional Budget Office is not yet available for these bills.

**VI. ADMINISTRATION POSITION**

The Trump administration’s position on these bills is unknown at this time.

**VII. EFFECT ON CURRENT LAW (RAMSEYER)**

None of these bills amend current law.