

**House Committee on Natural Resources,
Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs
Legislative Hearing on**

H.R. 2827, To provide for the equitable settlement of certain Indian land disputes regarding land in Illinois, and for other purposes; H.R. 6162, Albuquerque Indian School Act of 2025; and H.R. 7065, Seneca Nation Law Enforcement Efficiency Act

March 4, 2026

Good morning, Chair Hurd, Ranking Member Leger Fernández, and Members of the Subcommittee. I am Bryan Mercier, Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on legislation affecting Tribal Nations.

H.R. 2827, To provide for the equitable settlement of certain Indian land disputes regarding land in Illinois, and for other purposes

This bill would confer jurisdiction to the U.S. Court of Federal Claims to hear, determine, and render judgment on a land claim of the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma under its treaty with the United States known as the Treaty of Grouseland. Jurisdiction would expire within one year unless a claim is filed. The legislation further provides that the court render judgment without regard to the statute of limitations and any delay-based defense. Any and all future claims of the Tribe, tribal members, descendants, or predecessors in interest, to land in Illinois would be extinguished.

The Department recognizes the importance of resolving longstanding land claims. The Department looks forward to continuing to work with the Sponsor, the Subcommittee, and, as appropriate, the Department of Justice to ensure that any final legislation appropriately balances judicial access, finality, and the United States' trust obligations.

H.R. 6162, Albuquerque Indian School Act of 2025

H.R. 6162 would transfer approximately 9.89 acres of federal land into trust for the educational, health, cultural, business, and economic development of the 19 Pueblos in the State of New Mexico - the Acoma, Cochiti, Isleta, Jemez, Laguna, Nambe, Ohkay Owingeh (San Juan), Picuris, Pojoaque, San Felipe, San Ildefonso, Sandia, Santa Ana, Santa Clara, Santo Domingo, Taos, Tesuque, Zia, and Zuni. The federal land, managed by the General Services Administration, was historically part of the Albuquerque Indian School. The bill would prohibit gaming activities on the land.

The Department supports this legislation as it would further advance tribal sovereignty and self-determination. We welcome the opportunity to work with the Sponsor and the Subcommittee on

technical modifications to ensure timely relocation of all federal tenants so that transfer can occur within the bill's 90-day timeline.

H.R. 7065, Seneca Nation Law Enforcement Efficiency Act

Subject to the written concurrence of the Attorney General of the United States and the Seneca Nation of Indians, this legislation would nullify the applicability of the Act of July 2, 1948, with respect to the reservations of the Seneca Nation of Indians in New York. Currently, the jurisdiction on the reservations of the Seneca Nation of Indians is concurrent between the United States, New York State, and the Seneca Nation. If enacted, this would remove New York State's concurrent jurisdiction.

The Department recognizes that jurisdictional clarity is essential to effective law enforcement and public safety in Indian Country. We support continued dialogue among the Department of Justice, the Seneca Nation, the State, and other affected stakeholders. The Department defers to the Department of Justice regarding the balance that this bill strikes and other concerns.

Conclusion

Thank you, and I am pleased to answer any questions the Subcommittee may have.