



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  
([Kirstin.Liddell@mail.house.gov](mailto:Kirstin.Liddell@mail.house.gov)), Haig Kadian ([Haig.Kadian@mail.house.gov](mailto:Haig.Kadian@mail.house.gov)),  
and Seneca Feys ([Seneca.Feys@mail.house.gov](mailto:Seneca.Feys@mail.house.gov)); x6-9725  
**Date:** Monday, May 18, 2026  
**Subject:** Legislative Hearing on 4 Bills

---

The Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs will hold a legislative hearing on four bills: H.R. 1010 (Rep. Leger Fernandez), “*Bridging Agency Data Gaps and Ensuring Safety for Native Communities Act*” or the “*BADGES for Native Communities Act*”; H.R. 7954 (Rep. Hurd), “*Don Young Doug LaMalfa Indian Buffalo Management Act*”; H.R. 8483 (Rep. Issa), “*Barona Group of Capitan Grande Band of Mission Indians Land Transfer Act of 2025*”; and H.R. 8658 (Rep. Kennedy of UT), “*Indian Health Service Emergency Claims Parity Act*”.

The hearing will take place on **Thursday, May 21, 2026, at 2:00 p.m., in 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 Wednesday, May 20, 2026, if their member intends to participate in the hearing.

## **I. KEY MESSAGES**

- The hearing features three bills from House Republicans that restore natural resources through tribal engagement, promote tribal sovereignty, and improve access to health services.
- H.R. 7954 directs the Secretary of the Interior to work alongside tribes and tribal organizations to support the restoration and management of Buffalo on tribal lands.
- H.R. 8483 places approximately 836 acres of land into trust for the Barona Group of Capitan Grande Band of Mission Indians.
- H.R. 8658 protects patients from unfair medical debt by giving them a realistic window, 15 days instead of 72 hours, to notify the Indian Health Service (IHS) after receiving outside emergency care.

## **II. WITNESSES**

### **Panel I (Members of Congress):**

- *To Be Announced*

## Panel II (Outside Experts):

- **The Hon. Raymond Welch**, Chairman, Barona Group of Capitan Grande Band of Mission Indians, Lakeside, CA [H.R. 8483]
- **Mr. Ervin Carlson**, President, InterTribal Buffalo Council, Rapid City, SD [H.R. 7954]
- **Ms. Mikah Carlos**, Board Member, National Indian Health Board, Washington, DC [H.R. 8658]
- **Ms. Mary Kathryn Nagle**, Legal Counsel, National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center, Lame Deer, MT [H.R. 1010] (*Minority Witness*)

## III. BACKGROUND

### [H.R. 1010 \(Rep. Leger Fernandez\), “BADGES for Native Communities Act”](#)

H.R. 1010 revises federal policies to improve public safety in Indian Country. The legislation aims to bolster data collection and dissemination between tribal, federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies (LEAs). The bill also proposes a five-year demonstration program to centralize the background-check process for Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) law enforcement.

Police departments in and around Indian Country fall into several categories: tribally run, federally operated (through BIA), and, to varying degrees, state- or locally run.<sup>1</sup> This complex network has created significant data-sharing gaps. LEA data is spread across multiple systems, such as the National Crime Information Center and the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs). Further, tribes can access these systems only when they participate in the Tribal Access Program, which produces data gaps concerning Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) on tribal lands or related to tribal members.<sup>2</sup>

Hiring law enforcement officers can be a slow process, due to the thorough background and security clearance checks conducted by the Office of Personnel Management.<sup>3</sup> The lengthy processing period can discourage applicants, leading to positions remaining open for months, or even years.<sup>4</sup> Although current law allows BIA’s Office of Justice Services (OJS) to conduct background checks for tribal law enforcement and corrections officers when requested by a tribe’s 638 self-determination contract or self-governance compact,<sup>5</sup> potential BIA officers view the timeline as a hindrance to increasing the number of officers in Indian Country.

Through various mechanisms, H.R. 1010 attempts to solve issues relating to inadequate data sharing, lengthy background checks, tragically high MMIP tallies, and other public safety gaps afflicting Indian Country. The legislation directs the U.S. Attorney General to appoint one or more tribal facilitators to NamUs and expand the scope of the BIA’s required annual report on the needs of Indian Country in relation to law enforcement. The bill also authorizes a

---

<sup>1</sup> Nathan James, “Law Enforcement on Tribal Lands,” Congressional Research Service, January 12, 2024, <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF12569>.

<sup>2</sup> “Tribal Access Programs,” Department of Justice, <https://www.justice.gov/tribal/tribal-access-program-tap>.

<sup>3</sup> 25 C.F.R. § 63.16.

<sup>4</sup> Testimony of Stacy Zinn, House Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations oversight hearing on July 22, 2025, titled “Examining the Trump Administration’s Work Combatting Transnational Cartels in Indian Country,” <https://naturalresources.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=418270>.

<sup>5</sup> 25 U.S.C. § 2802(e)(4); 25 U.S.C. § 5301.

Government Accountability Office (GAO) report to study the evidence collection, handling, response times, and processing procedures of the BIA’s OJS. Additionally, the legislation requires the Department of Justice (DOJ) to consult with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to provide training materials and culturally appropriate wellness programs for tribes and BIA law enforcement officers, create a new five-year demonstration program related to in-house BIA law enforcement officer background checks and a new grant program lasting four fiscal years to close data gaps concerning MMIP.

While public safety in Indian Country is a top priority for House Republicans,<sup>6</sup> H.R. 1010 presents substantial budgetary concerns. S. 390, an identical companion bill introduced in the Senate, received a Congressional Budget Office (CBO) cost estimate, which found that implementing S. 390 would cost \$10 million from Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 to FY 2030. Without an offset, the legislation violates the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress’s House Floor Protocols.<sup>7</sup>

### **H.R. 7954 (Rep. Hurd), “Don Young Doug LaMalfa Indian Buffalo Management Act”**

Sponsored by Representative Jeff Hurd (R-CO-03), H.R. 7954 directs the Secretary of the Interior to work with Indian tribes and tribal organizations to support tribal capacity to restore, manage, and conserve buffalo and buffalo habitats through grants, contracts, cooperative agreements, and technical assistance.

The American bison, commonly referred to as the buffalo, has long occupied a position of cultural and historic prominence in the U.S., culminating in its designation as “national mammal” in 2016.<sup>8</sup> American Indians and Alaska Natives have also nurtured a longstanding cultural and spiritual relationship with the buffalo. For centuries, many tribes have used buffalo for food, shelter, tools, and clothing, but the near extinction of the buffalo threatened that relationship.<sup>9</sup> In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, North America’s buffalo population fell from tens of millions to approximately one thousand.<sup>10</sup> Fortunately, with the conservation and restoration efforts that followed, buffalo populations have significantly recovered.<sup>11</sup> Today, some estimates place the U.S. buffalo population at more than 200,000.<sup>12</sup>

Tribes have been instrumental in facilitating buffalo’s return. In 1991, several tribes with buffalo herds founded the Intertribal Buffalo Council (ITBC).<sup>13</sup> In 2009, the ITBC was granted a federal charter under section 17 of the Indian Reorganization Act to aid tribes in the restoration of

---

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., House Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations oversight hearing on July 22, 2025, titled “Examining the Trump Administration’s Work Combatting Transnational Cartels in Indian Country,” <https://naturalresources.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=418270>.

<sup>7</sup> “S. 390, BADGES for Native Communities Act,” Congressional Budget Office, <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/61715>; “119th Congress Floor Protocols,” The Office of Congressman Steve Scalise, <https://www.majorityleader.gov/schedule/floor-protocols.html>.

<sup>8</sup> P.L. 114-152.

<sup>9</sup> Intertribal Buffalo Council testimony before Indian and Insular Affairs Subcommittee. December 2023.

[https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/carlson\\_testimony.pdf](https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/carlson_testimony.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> “Where the Buffalo Roamed,” National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/gosp/learn/nature/where-the-buffalo-roamed.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> “Bison Management,” National Park Service, Theodore Roosevelt National Park, <https://www.nps.gov/thro/learn/nature/bison-management.htm>.

<sup>12</sup> 2022 Census of Agriculture: United States Summary and State Data, Department of Agriculture, February 2024, [https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full\\_Report/Volume\\_1,\\_Chapter\\_1\\_US/usv1.pdf](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_US/usv1.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> “History,” Intertribal Buffalo Council, <https://www.itbcbuffalonation.org/itbchistory>.

buffalo on tribal lands.<sup>14</sup> Today, the ITBC is comprised of 90 tribes throughout 23 states and continues to support the restoration of buffalo across Indian Country.<sup>15</sup>

Considerable work remains to ensure the continued restoration and management of buffalo. H.R. 7954 continues these efforts by directing the Secretary of the Interior to work with tribes and tribal organizations to promote tribal management of buffalo and buffalo habitat, continue conservation work to enhance buffalo herds, and ensure that tribes are consulted on Department of the Interior initiatives related to buffalo and buffalo habitats. Additionally, this legislation directs the Secretary of the Interior to enter into grants, contracts, or cooperative agreements with tribes and tribal organizations for the purposes of buffalo restoration and management. Lastly, the legislation authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to enter into agreements with tribes or tribal organizations to dispose of surplus buffalo on federal land and transfer the buffalo to Indian land.

**[H.R. 8483 \(Rep. Issa\), “Barona Group of Capitan Grande Band of Mission Indians Land Transfer Act of 2025”](#)**

The Barona Group of Capitan Grande Band of Mission Indians, also known as the Barona Band of Mission Indians (Barona Band), reside on a 7,500-acre reservation (Barona Reservation) located in San Diego County, California.<sup>16</sup> The Barona Reservation was not the Barona Band’s initial reservation. In 1875, President Grant signed an executive order establishing the Capitan Grande Reservation for the Viejas and Barona Bands, who both resided in the area.<sup>17</sup> The reservation originally encompassed 15,573 acres. In 1931, the City of San Diego received congressional approval to buy a portion of the Capitan Grande Reservation to build the El Capitan Reservoir.<sup>18</sup> The portion of the Capitan Grande Reservation that was sold was where the Barona Band’s members predominately resided and had buried their ancestors.<sup>19</sup>

With the funds that the Barona Band received as compensation for their former land, they purchased the Barona Reservation, a few miles south of the Capitan Grande Reservation.<sup>20</sup> The Barona Band continues to hold deep ancestral ties to the latter location, however, and aims to connect it to the Barona Reservation.

Introduced by Representative Darrell Issa (R-CA-48), H.R. 8483 places approximately 836 acres of land into trust for the Barona Band. The Barona Band has worked alongside the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management to reclaim this property, which is located between the Barona and the Capitan Grande Reservations. Consisting mainly of steep hills and rocky terrain, the land holds immense historical and cultural value for the Barona Band.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> *Id.*; 25 U.S.C. § 477.

<sup>15</sup> Briefing material provided to Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs Staff from the Intertribal Buffalo Council on May 11, 2026. On file.

<sup>16</sup> Background Information Provided to Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs Staff on May 12, 2026. On file.

<sup>17</sup> Tiller, Veronica E. Velarde, *TILLER’S GUIDE TO INDIAN COUNTRY: ECONOMIC PROFILES OF AMERICAN INDIAN RESERVATIONS*, (3rd ed. 2006), pg. 252.

<sup>18</sup> “Barona History,” Barona Band of Mission Indians, [www.barona-nsn.gov/history](http://www.barona-nsn.gov/history).

<sup>19</sup> Background Information Provided to Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs Staff on May 12, 2026.

<sup>20</sup> Tiller, Veronica E. Velarde, *TILLER’S GUIDE TO INDIAN COUNTRY: ECONOMIC PROFILES OF AMERICAN INDIAN RESERVATIONS*, (3rd ed. 2006), pg. 252.

<sup>21</sup> Information provided to Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs Staff on May 12, 2026.

The legislation includes a gaming prohibition, protects existing water rights and service agreements, and states that all valid, preexisting liens, rights-of-ways, reciprocal road right-of-way agreements, licenses, leases, permits, and easements will remain unaltered.

#### **H.R. 8658 (Rep. Kennedy of UT), “Indian Health Service Emergency Claims Parity Act”**

H.R. 8658, sponsored by Representative Mike Kennedy (R-UT-03), amends section 406 of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act<sup>22</sup> to require that non-elderly and non-disabled Indian patients have at least 15 days to notify IHS for emergency treatment or admission for Purchase/Referred Care (PRC) purposes. The bill preserves the existing 30-day statutory notice window for elderly or disabled Indians.

IHS uses the PRC program to pay outside providers when needed services are unavailable at an IHS or tribal facility. For IHS to authorize PRC payment, patients generally must satisfy tribal-affiliation, residency, notification, medical-priority, and alternate-resource requirements.<sup>23</sup>

Current law gives elderly or disabled Indians a statutory 30-day emergency notice window,<sup>24</sup> while the general rule for other patients is a 72-hour regulatory deadline.<sup>25</sup> The regulation allows extensions when timely notice was impracticable or other good cause exists, but the default 72-hour window remains the operative rule in IHS and tribal PRC materials.<sup>26</sup> The 72-hour deadline can be unrealistic in true emergencies, particularly in rural or remote areas where patients may be hospitalized, transferred between facilities, recovering, or relying on assistance from individuals unfamiliar with the PRC notice rules. When the deadline is missed, otherwise eligible claims may be denied, increasing the risk that Native patients are billed or sent to collections for emergency care.<sup>27</sup>

H.R. 8658 establishes a more practical statutory floor by giving non-elderly and non-disabled patients at least 15 days to notify IHS of emergency treatment or admission. This longer deadline aids patients and families and still provides HIS with timely notice. The bill would reduce denials tied solely to the short emergency-notice window, while preserving the existing 30-day rule for elderly or disabled patients.

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

##### **H.R. 1010 (Rep. Leger Fernandez), “BADGES for Native Communities Act”**

###### **Sec. 101. National Missing and Unidentified Persons System Tribal Facilitator.**

- Directs DOJ to appoint “tribal facilitators” to NamUs.

---

<sup>22</sup> 25 U.S.C. § 1646.

<sup>23</sup> “Purchased/Referred Care (PRC)”, Indian Health Service, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, <https://www.ihs.gov/forpatients/prc/>.

<sup>24</sup> 25 U.S.C. § 1646.

<sup>25</sup> 42 C.F.R. § 136.24(c).

<sup>26</sup> 42 C.F.R. § 136.24.

<sup>27</sup> Testimony from Acting Deputy Director Darrell LaRoche on S. 699, S.1055, and S. 2098, February 4, 2026, <https://www.hhs.gov/about/agencies/asl/testimony/2026/02/04/ihs-testimony-s-2098-s-1055-and-s-699.html>.

**Sec. 102. Report on Indian Country Law Enforcement Personnel Resources and Need.**

- Broadens the information that must be included in the Tribal Law and Order Act annual report to Congress to include unmet staffing needs at tribal and BIA agencies, BIA correctional facility infrastructure needs, tribal police and court facility infrastructure and capital needs, and public safety and emergency communication needs.
- Requires the Attorney General to report to Congress on full-time employees at DOJ agencies assigned to work on criminal investigations and prosecutions in Indian country.
- Directs GAO to report to Congress on DOJ's unmet staffing needs concerning work on criminal investigations and prosecutions in Indian country.

**Sec. 201. Demonstration Program on Bureau of Indian Affairs Law Enforcement Employment Background Checks.**

- Creates a new 5-year demonstration program in BIA for conducting in-house background checks for law enforcement officer applications, with a required report to Congress within three years that includes recommendations on the reauthorization of the program.

**Sec. 202. Missing or Murdered Response Coordination Grant Program.**

- Establishes a new grant program to coordinate efforts related to MMIP, with an appropriation of \$1 million annually from FY2026 through FY2030.

**Sec. 203. GAO Study on Federal Law Enforcement Agency Evidence Collection, Handling, and Processing.**

- Commissions a GAO report on federal LEA evidence collection, handling, and processing pertaining to criminal cases within 18 months.

**Sec. 204. Bureau of Indian Affairs and Tribal Law Enforcement Officer Counseling Resources Interdepartmental Coordination.**

- Authorizes inter-agency coordination between HHS, DOJ, and BIA OJS, ensuring that culturally appropriate tribal mental health and wellness programs are instituted.

**[H.R. 7954 \(Rep. Hurd\), “Don Young Doug LaMalfa Indian Buffalo Management Act”](#)**

**Sec. 4. Buffalo Resource Management.**

- Directs the Secretary of the Interior to work with tribes and tribal organizations to promote tribal capacity to manage buffalo and buffalo habitat.
- Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to enter into grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements with tribes and tribal organizations for the purpose of buffalo restoration.

**Sec. 7. Buffalo from Federal Land.**

- Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to enter into agreements with tribes or tribal organizations to dispose of surplus buffalo on federal land and transfer the buffalo to Indian land.

**[H.R. 8483 \(Rep. Issa\), “Barona Group of Capitan Grande Band of Mission Indians Land Transfer Act of 2025”](#)**

**Sec 2. Land to be Taken into Trust for the Barona Group of Capitan Grande Band of Mission Indians.**

- Directs the Secretary of the Interior to take three parcels of land, totaling approximately 836 acres, into trust for the Barona Group of Capitan Grande Band of Mission Indians.

**[H.R. 8658 \(Rep. Kennedy of UT\), “Indian Health Service Emergency Claims Parity Act”](#)**

**Sec 2. Authorization for Emergency Contract Health Services.**

- Amends section 406 of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act such that, except for elderly or disabled Indians, the time limitation for notifying IHS of emergency treatment or admission shall not be less than 15 days.

**V. CBO COST ESTIMATE**

A formal cost estimate from CBO 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)**

**[H.R. 1010](#)**

**[H.R. 8658](#)**