



USET

SOVEREIGNTY PROTECTION FUND

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Transmitted Electronically

June 23, 2026

The Honorable Jeffrey Hurd
Representative
U.S. House of Representatives
1641 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: USET SPF Support for Passage of H.R. 8954, the “Tribal Regulatory Reform Implementation Act of 2026”

Dear Congressman Hurd,

On behalf of the United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF), we write to express our support for passage of H.R. 8954, the “Tribal Regulatory Reform Implementation Act of 2026.” The Indian Tribal Regulatory Reform and Business Development Act (P.L. 106-447) was signed into law nearly 26 years ago and yet the primary purpose of the law has remained unfulfilled. Although P.L. 106-447 directed the Secretary of Commerce—in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior—to establish the Regulatory Reform and Business Development on Indian Lands Authority (Authority) no later than 60 days after enactment of the law, this action never occurred. The purpose of the Authority was to facilitate the identification and subsequent revisions of federal policies that obstruct investment, business development, and the creation of wealth with respect to the economies of Tribal communities. Since the Department of Commerce has failed to fulfill its directive to establish the Authority, USET SPF supports passage of H.R. 5984, which would transfer the Authority to the Department of the Interior (DOI).

USET SPF is a non-profit, inter-Tribal organization advocating on behalf of thirty-three (33) federally recognized Tribal Nations from the Northeastern Woodlands to the Everglades and across the Gulf of Turtle Island.¹ USET SPF is dedicated to promoting, protecting, and advancing the inherent sovereign rights and authorities of Tribal Nations and in assisting its membership in dealing effectively with public policy issues.

¹ USET SPF member Tribal Nations include: Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas (TX), Catawba Indian Nation (SC), Cayuga Nation (NY), Chickahominy Indian Tribe (VA), Chickahominy Indian Tribe—Eastern Division (VA), Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (NC), Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians (ME), Jena Band of Choctaw Indians (LA), Mashantucket Pequot Indian Tribe (CT), Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe (MA), Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida (FL), Mi'kmaq Nation (ME), Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MS), Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut (CT), Monacan Indian Nation (VA), Nansemond Indian Nation (VA), Narragansett Indian Tribe (RI), Oneida Indian Nation (NY), Pamunkey Indian Tribe (VA), Passamaquoddy Tribe at Indian Township (ME), Passamaquoddy Tribe at Pleasant Point (ME), Penobscot Indian Nation (ME), Poarch Band of Creek Indians (AL), Rappahannock Tribe (VA), Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe (NY), Seminole Tribe of Florida (FL), Seneca Nation of Indians (NY), Shinnecock Indian Nation (NY), Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Upper Mattaponi Tribe (VA), and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) (MA).

Because there is Strength in Unity

Establishment of the Authority and Publication of its Report is Long Overdue

For nearly 26 years, the law has not fulfilled its intended purpose since the Authority was never established by the Department of Commerce. The creation of this Authority is profoundly needed to address the persistent policy issues that obstruct economic development and economic opportunity in Indian Country. As the current Administration is focused on reducing administrative oversight that unnecessarily burdens economic development across the United States, the removal of policies that obstruct the ability of Tribal Nations to further contribute to national, regional, and local economies must be an integral part of this effort.

USET SPF notes that members of the Authority would serve without compensation, except for covered travel expenses, and any federal officers or employees serving as members would not receive additional compensation outside of their salaried positions. In essence, enactment of H.R. 8954 does not authorize additional appropriations to fulfill its directives, rather it seeks to correct a long overdue administrative omission.

For these reasons, USET SPF fully supports passage of H.R. 8954 and urges Congress to exercise its oversight authority to ensure that the Authority is fully stood up at DOI with the necessary resources and personnel required to ensure the Authority's success in meeting its directives. This action would uphold the federal government's trust and treaty obligations to support Tribal economic sovereignty and self-determination. By formally establishing and standing up the Authority, the federal government has an opportunity to receive significant input and recommendations from Tribal Nations on how to improve economic policies and programs to meaningfully benefit Tribal Nations and our surrounding non-Tribal communities.

Ensure Interagency Coordination Once the Authority is Transferred to DOI

In transferring the Authority from the Department of Commerce to DOI, Congress must ensure that the Authority is able to conduct its review and analysis of economic policies across the federal government. The Authority should not be solely focused on conducting its review of federal economic programs at DOI but rather take a whole of government approach by coordinating its review of policies with other federal agencies with an economic policy nexus. This interagency coordination must include agencies at the Department of the Treasury, U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Department of Commerce, the Small Business Administration, and any other relevant federal agencies focused on the development and implementation of economic policies.

In addition, USET SPF notes that under Sec. 6(b) of the original authorizing statute (P.L. 106-447), the Authority has the power to, "secure directly from any Federal department or agency such information as the Authority considers necessary to carry out the duties of the Authority." This language should be expanded to require interagency coordination between the Authority and federal agencies to identify and provide recommendations on improving policies that support economic development in Indian Country. This will ensure that the Authority is able to gather the necessary input and develop recommendations for federal agencies to improve economic program accessibility and opportunity for Tribal Nations, Tribal citizens, and Tribal communities.

Further, Congress must ensure that DOI has the necessary capacity—such as the appropriate funds and personnel—to properly stand up and manage the Authority. Congress must ensure that DOI is properly and sufficiently prepared to support the Authority in fulfilling its directives. USET SPF also recommends that the Authority coordinate with other agencies across the federal government through participation in the White House Council on Native American Affairs. This coordination will be essential to increasing the Authority's

purview in conducting analysis and providing recommendations on federal policies that obstruct economic development and opportunity in Indian Country.

Conclusion

As Tribal Nations pursue our efforts in building and rebuilding our Tribal economies, the federal government must uphold its trust and treaty obligations to ensure federal programs are accessible to fully support these efforts. The sole purpose for which the Authority was established was to accomplish this very task by identifying federal policies that have hindered or outright obstructed economic development and economic opportunity for Tribal Nations. USET SPF fully supports enactment of H.R. 8954 to transfer the Authority from the Department of Commerce to DOI with the caveat that the Authority will receive the proper support from DOI to accomplish its directives. We look forward to working with Congress and DOI to stand up the Authority in a timely manner and with the goal of fulfilling its directives to improve economic policies to support Tribal economic sovereignty and self-determination. Should you have any questions or require further information, please contact Liz Malerba, USET SPF Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs, at LMalerba@usetinc.org or 615-838-5906.

Sincerely,



Chief Kirk Francis
President



Kitcki A. Carroll
Executive Director