

Minority Views

H.R. 7102, The Native American Entrepreneurial Opportunity Act

The mission of the Office of Native American Affairs is to ensure American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians seeking to start and grow small businesses have access to SBA's entrepreneurial development, lending, and procurement programs. The Office currently engages in numerous outreach activities, including tribal consultations, development and distribution of promotional materials, and participation in national economic development conferences. The Office also contracts with third-party vendors to provide workshops on business development and financial literacy, training webinars, incubator training, and online entrepreneurial classes.¹

In 2020, there were more than 3.7 million people who identified as American Indian and Alaska Native alone,² and there are 574 federally recognized Indian tribes in the United States.³ In exchange for the surrender of their lands, their removal, and resettlement, the United States signed 375 treaties, passed laws, and instituted policies to shape and define the special relationship between the federal government and tribal governments.⁴ However, the U.S. government also forced many Native Americans to give up their culture and, historically, has not provided the resources to support Native American interconnected infrastructure, self-governance, housing, education, health, and economic development needs.⁵ As a result, Native Americans continue to experience lower educational attainment, higher unemployment rates, and lower median incomes than other racial and ethnic groups.⁶

Entrepreneurship can provide a pathway out of poverty for American Indians and Alaska Natives, which have the highest poverty rate among all racial and ethnic groups. Native American-owned businesses contribute over \$33 billion to the U.S. economy every year and employ 200,000 people.⁷ Statutorily authorizing the Office of Native American Affairs at SBA will increase access to federal programs and services that support Native American entrepreneurs across the country and help Native Americans launch and grow small businesses, and in turn, promote economic development in their tribal communities.

Sincerely,



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Ranking Member

¹ *Office of Native American Affairs*, U.S. SMALL BUS. ADMIN. (Nov. 14, 2023), <https://www.sba.gov/about-sba/sba-locations/headquarters-offices/office-native-american-affairs>.

² *Table P1: Race*, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU (2020), <https://data.census.gov/table?q=010XX00US>.

³ *Facts for Features: American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month*, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU (Nov. 15, 2023), <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2023/aian-month.html>.

⁴ U.S. COMM'N ON C.R., *BROKEN PROMISES: CONTINUING FEDERAL FUNDING SHORTFALL FOR NATIVE AMERICANS*, (Dec. 20, 2018), <https://www.usccr.gov/pubs/2018/12-20-Broken-Promises.pdf>.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Dedrick Asante Muhammad, Esha Kamra, Connor Sanchez, Kathy Ramirez, & Rogelio Tec, *Racial Wealth Snapshot: Native Americans*, NAT'L CMTY. REINVESTMENT COAL. (Feb. 14, 2022), <https://ncrc.org/racial-wealth-snapshot-native-americans>.

⁷ *Table AB1900NESD01: Statistics for Employer and Nonemployer Firms by Industry, Sex, Ethnicity, Race, and Veteran Status*: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU (2019), <https://data.census.gov/table/ABS NESD2019.AB1900NESD01?q=ab1900NESD01&g=010XX00US&y=2019>.

