



National American Indian Veterans, Inc (NAIV)

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The Honorable Mike Bost

Chairman

House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mark Takano

Ranking Member

House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515



Re: Opposition to H.R. 6764 – Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee Oversight Act of 2025

Dear Chairman Bost and Ranking Member Takano:

On behalf of the National American Indian Veterans (NAIV), we respectfully submit this letter in opposition to H.R. 6764, the Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee Oversight Act of 2025, as currently drafted. We urge the Committee not to advance this legislation from committee without substantial revision.

Concern Regarding the Advisory Committee on Tribal and Indian Affairs

H.R. 6764 proposes restructuring advisory committees within the Department of Veterans Affairs. Under the bill as drafted, the current Advisory Committee on Tribal and Indian Affairs would effectively be replaced with a consolidated advisory structure in which Native American veterans would have only a single representative seat within a broader “special populations” committee.

The existing Advisory Committee on Tribal and Indian Affairs provides structured, regionally representative input to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The committee includes approximately 12–15 members reflecting:

- Representation across Indian Health Service (IHS) service areas
- Both reservation-based and urban Native veteran communities
- Geographic and cultural diversity among Tribal Nations

This structure ensures that Native American veterans can provide regionally informed, culturally grounded, and policy-specific recommendations directly to the Secretary.

Reducing that representation to a single seat on a consolidated advisory committee represents a significant downgrade in voice and consultation capacity.

Elevated Need Requires Increased Attention — Not Reduced Representation

American Indian and Alaska Native veterans face some of the most severe disparities of any veteran population.

Data consistently demonstrate that AI/AN veterans experience:



- The highest or among the highest suicide rates of any racial or ethnic group of veterans
- Disproportionately high rates of homelessness
- Elevated rates of PTSD and substance use disorders
- Significant barriers to culturally safe and geographically accessible care
- Persistent socio-economic challenges linked to historical and structural inequities

At the same time, American Indian and Alaska Native individuals continue to serve in the United States Armed Forces at the highest per capita rates of any racial or ethnic group in the country.

This combination — highest rates of service and highest levels of risk — demands increased engagement, enhanced consultation, and strengthened advisory structures within the Department of Veterans Affairs.

It does not justify reducing Native representation within VA advisory mechanisms.

Sovereignty and Federal Trust Responsibility

Native American veterans are not simply a “special population.” They are citizens of sovereign Tribal Nations. Federal engagement with Native veterans implicates longstanding principles of:

- Tribal sovereignty
- Government-to-government consultation
- Federal trust responsibility

The Advisory Committee on Tribal and Indian Affairs operationalizes those principles within the Department of Veterans Affairs by providing a structured mechanism for meaningful consultation and policy feedback.

Replacing this committee with a single representative seat within a generalized advisory framework diminishes that structured engagement and risks reducing meaningful consultation to symbolic inclusion.

Practical Governance Concerns

A single representative cannot adequately reflect the perspectives of:



- 575 federally recognized tribes
- All IHS service areas
- Both rural and urban Native veteran populations
- The diverse cultural, geographic, and policy realities facing Native communities

The current Advisory Committee on Tribal and Indian Affairs ensures regional distribution of voices and subject matter expertise. Eliminating that structure weakens the Secretary's ability to receive comprehensive, regionally informed recommendations on issues affecting Native veterans.

Request for Committee Action

NAIV respectfully requests that the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs:

1. Decline to advance H.R. 6764 out of committee as currently drafted;
2. Preserve the Advisory Committee on Tribal and Indian Affairs in statute; and
3. Ensure that any advisory restructuring maintains — at minimum — equivalent Native representation and consultation capacity.

Given the documented disparities affecting American Indian and Alaska Native veterans and their continued service at the highest per capita rates of any racial or ethnic group, now is the time to strengthen Native representation within the VA — not reduce it.

We stand ready to work collaboratively with the Committee to strengthen advisory structures in a manner that enhances accountability while preserving meaningful Tribal consultation.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to all who have served.

Respectfully,

Peter Lengkeek

National Commander

National American Indian Veterans (NAIV)