



Contact: Helo Hancock
Legislative Director
PH: 208.686.0752
Cell: 208.582.2314
hhancock@cdatribe-nsn.gov

Indian Country's Trust Reform Bill Headed to President Obama's Desk

For immediate release

DATE June 10, 2016

Washington, DC - The Indian Trust Asset Reform Act or H.R. 812, has passed its final congressional hurdle and heads for the President's desk for his signature.

Congressman Mike Simpson (R-ID) sponsored the bill in the United States House of Representatives, which passed in February of this year by a voice vote. Senator Mike Crapo (R-ID) introduced a companion bill in the Senate and led the charge to ensure its passage today.

"History has shown us that Tribes contribute in a major way to our local economy," Crapo said. "Federal regulation has helped to stifle this development and it is appropriate that this legislation has been conceived from the ground up with tribal members, who will now have a larger say in developing resource plans for their own assets that can create lasting employment."

"This legislation is a step forward for tribes in how they manage their assets," said Simpson. "Instead of the complicated and inconsistent bureaucratic process tribes currently go through, H.R. 812 aims to streamline this practice to provide tribes with the necessary tools to promote economic development."

Indian tribes who choose to participate will now have the ability to manage their tribal assets such as land and natural resources currently held in trust and managed by the federal government. Tribes that volunteer for the program will submit a management plan to the Secretary of the Department of Interior that lists the trust assets and details the tribe's management objectives and priorities.

"For years, we've been asking to manage our own assets and make our own decisions about our resources so we can do what's best for our Tribe. Today we can say we finally have the flexibility to make choices based on what is best for our tribe. We want to thank Congressman Simpson and Senator Crapo for working so hard to get this bill passed. We're looking forward to seeing it signed by President Obama," Chairman Chief Allan of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe.

"We're thrilled about this. Many of us have been working on this issue for a decade. After all, who would know better how to manage tribal trust resources than tribes themselves?" said Ernie Stensgar, the Vice-Chairman of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and Chairman of the Trust Reform Committee for ATNI. Stensgar has testified in front of Congress on the benefits of this bill.

"This piece of legislation is a great example of the advocacy and strength of our regional tribal organization - the Affiliated Tribes of the Northwest Indians - and the legacy of strong leadership



Contact: Helo Hancock
Legislative Director
PH: 208.686.0752
Cell: 208.582.2314

hhancock@cdatribe-nsn.gov

dedicated and fiercely committed to holding the United States accountable to upholding its trust responsibility." said ATNI President Fawn Sharp.

This is the first Indian policy bill to pass this Congress and many tribal leaders are calling it the most significant piece of trust reform legislation to come out of Congress in two decades.

The bill provides for the restructuring of the Office of Special Trustee (OST), which was intended to be a temporary entity that would oversee certain financial reforms of Indian trust funds at the Department of Interior. Despite having completed the reforms it was tasked with, OST's role and its budget have expanded over the years, taking money from other BIA programs that have been facing budget decrease despite growing need. H.R. 812 would transfer the necessary and relevant activities OST performs to the Undersecretary of the Department of Interior. The efficiencies gained from this would provide an immediate benefit to Indian Country.

###