

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

October 30, 2019

The Honorable Tara Sweeney
Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
MS-4660-MIB
Washington, D.C. 20240

Re: Petition of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation for Federal Acknowledgment

Dear Assistant Secretary Sweeney:

We are writing as members of the House Natural Resources Committee in support of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation's (SSMN) request for a 180-day extension to the public comment and response period to the Department of the Interior's Proposed Finding Against Federal Acknowledgment, issued on November 18, 2018, in opposition to SSMN's petition for federal acknowledgment pursuant to 25 C.F.R. Part 83.

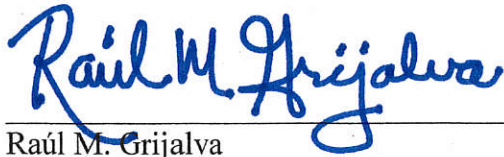
According to SSMN, the Office of Federal Acknowledgment (OFA) has failed to fully respond to SSMN's request for all documents reviewed or used by OFA in its consideration of SSMN's petition for federal acknowledgment. As SSMN points out, it cannot properly respond to the Proposed Finding until it receives, and has a fair opportunity to examine and analyze, all the documents reviewed by OFA. Without the full disclosure of OFA's own research and analysis, SSMN will have to incur the additional time and cost burdens of having outside consultants and attorneys review the extensive historical record of this matter.

As you know, the Natural Resources Committee has conducted many oversight hearings on the federal acknowledgment process and received testimony from former Assistant Secretaries as well as the current Director of OFA. During such hearings, the Committee reviewed Indian Country's concerns regarding the process' overall effectiveness, fairness, and transparency. We continue to monitor the integrity of the process and its fairness to unacknowledged tribes – especially SSMN – who have been engaged in the process for decades at considerable expense and who reasonably expect a fair, timely, and thorough response to their petition consistent with the federal regulations. As such, the Proposed Finding issued on the SSMN petition and the public comment letters from former OFA staff raise substantial concerns. Given this matter's circumstances, we believe that granting the full extension of time requested by the SSMN will be both fair and reasonable. Consistent with our oversight role, we will continue to follow the developments in this matter to ensure that SSMN's petition is addressed in

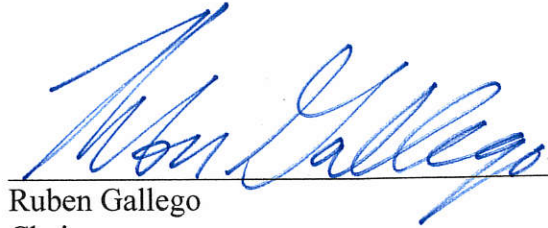
accordance with the purpose of the federal acknowledgment process and its governing regulations.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns and our support for the SSMN's requested extension of time.

Sincerely,



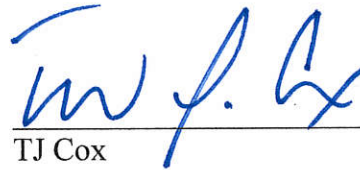
Raúl M. Grijalva
Chair
Committee on Natural Resources



Ruben Gallego
Chair
Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the
United States



Debra Haaland
Chair
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and
Public Lands



TJ Cox
Chair
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations



Tom McClintock
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans and Wildlife