



Protection of Native cultural resources is critical to the vitality of traditional Native religions, customs, languages, and tribal sovereignty. These resources may include not only land and objects but also cultural practices, languages, and symbols. Seventy of the remaining 139 spoken tribal languages could become extinct by 2015.

Historic & Cultural Preservation

After nearly two centuries of failed policies to assimilate Native people, the era of tribal self-determination has advanced efforts in cultural preservation and revitalization. Federal policies enacted over the past 20 to 30 years have increased tribal management of programs and services. However, increased funding is crucial to sustain current efforts to preserve cultural practices and sacred places and advance tribal self-determination.

Key Recommendations

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Interior - Environment Appropriations Bill

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)

- Provide \$4 million for Section 10 of NAGPRA and create a line item for grants to fund efforts surrounding the appropriate handling and return of culturally-unidentifiable remains.

The NAGPRA Section 10 program authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to award funds to tribes, Native Hawaiian Organizations, and museums for repatriation of cultural items and human remains. Establishment of a tribal priority under Section 10 would ensure grant funding is awarded to tribes, and creation of a separate line item to fund work with culturally-unidentifiable remains would support tribal repatriation efforts.

- Provide a 10 percent increase for investigations into failure of museums or other institutions to comply with NAGPRA, and create a line item for investigations of tribal complaints against museums or other institutions.

The number of tribal complaints regarding the failure of museum compliance with NAGPRA has been an ongoing and troublesome issue. Providing a 10 percent increase for these investigations and a tribal specific line item will assist the Department of the Interior’s efforts to respond in a timely manner and is essential to the successful implementation of NAGPRA.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Interior - Environment Appropriations Bill

Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Program

- *Provide \$15 million for the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Program.*

The Tribal Historic Preservation Office program was created in 1992. The program is operated by the National Park Service and funding for Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) is provided through the Historic Preservation Fund. THPOs are essential to record and preserve cultural practices of their respective tribes and are active in capturing oral histories, preserving and revitalizing Native languages, and seeking the return of Native American ancestral and sacred objects. THPOs also have a critical federal-tribal role in the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), which requires government-to-government consultation regarding sacred places and objects.