

March 4 , 2022

Dear Chairman Schatz and Vice Chairman Murkowski:

On behalf of the Tribal Nations and Tribal organizations listed below, we respectfully request that you defer consideration of groups seeking federal acknowledgment to the Department of the Interior's Office of Federal Acknowledgment (OFA).

Federal acknowledgment of Indian tribes is a solemn consideration of the United States. Federally acknowledged tribes are sovereigns with significant governmental powers impacting both Indians and non-Indians, including the authority to tax, regulate activity within tribal territory, and take away personal freedoms through the exercise of criminal jurisdiction. Acknowledgment decisions should be made on merit and not politics.

Although Congress certainly has the power to acknowledge groups seeking federal acknowledgment, Congress should defer to the administrative process that is well equipped to investigate whether a group is an historical tribe or whether the persons claiming modern citizenship in that historical tribe can demonstrate genealogical descent from that tribe.

The OFA process protects the interests of established Tribal Nations. Oftentimes, groups seeking federal acknowledgment claim tribal identities that do not belong to them. Even more often, the people claiming to be descendants of known historic tribes cannot demonstrate tribal ancestry, or any Native ancestry at all. The OFA process separates meritorious claims of tribal identity from the many of examples of fraud we see from hundreds of groups across the country.

Four bills have been introduced into the Senate or House that would Congressionally recognize four groups as tribes. If the Congress enacts any of these bills, hundreds of other groups claiming to be tribes also will seek federal legislation to circumvent the OFA process.

We respectfully request that you defer to the OFA for action.

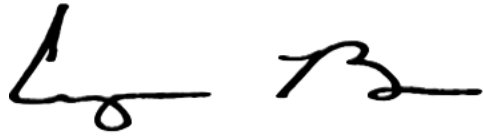
Sincerely,



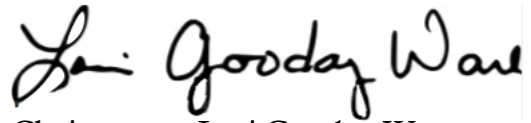
Principal Chief Richard Sneed  
Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians



Chief Ben Barnes  
Shawnee Tribe



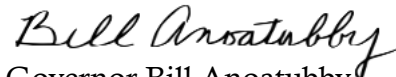
Chief Cyrus Ben  
Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians



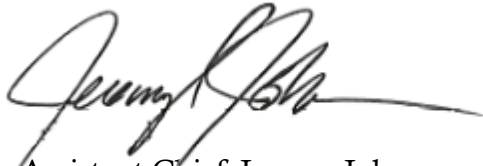
Chairwoman Lori Gooday Ware  
Fort Sill Apache Tribe



President Deborah Dotson  
Delaware Nation



Governor Bill Anoatubby  
Chickasaw Nation



Assistant Chief Jeremy Johnson  
Delaware Tribe of Indians



President Jeffrey Stiffarm  
Fort Belknap Indian Community



Chairwoman Margo Gray  
United Indian Nations of Oklahoma Kansas and Texas