



Parity for Tribal Law Enforcement Act Reintroduced



Navajo Police Department Officers along the Shiprock Marathon route. Photo courtesy of Navajo Police Department

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Late last week, Congressman Newhouse (R-WA-04) and Senator Cantwell (D-WA) introduced the Parity for Tribal Law Enforcement Act of 2025 in the House and Senate as H.R. 4715 and S. 2452, respectively.

The Parity for Tribal Law Enforcement Act seeks to address the staffing shortages plaguing law enforcement in Indian Country by creating a program to recognize tribal law enforcement officers as federal law enforcement officers for the dual purposes of better benefits and to eliminate the need for tribes to secure Special Law Enforcement Commissions to enforce federal law.

The expanded benefits would provide tribal law enforcement officers with access to federal pensions, death and injury benefits, and legal protections. These measures would strengthen recruitment and retention efforts, allowing tribal agencies to remain competitive in attracting qualified officers. Currently, many state, county, and municipal law enforcement agencies have more resources, which allows them to offer higher salaries, comprehensive benefits, and better work-life balance. In contrast, tribes often lack the funding to match these incentives, resulting in lower staffing levels. This shortage places heavier workloads on existing officers, and can lead to burnout, resignations, and early retirement, all of which exacerbate the staffing crisis.

The bill is similar to the Parity for Tribal Law Enforcement bill introduced by the Washington delegation in the 118th Congress, but this version reflects changes recommended by the House Committee on Natural Resources. The new version of the bill makes the program optional for officers to participate in and allows officers to purchase credit for prior service, which were two of the most notable changes made by the Committee in the 118th Congress.

NNWO has spent the first six months of the 119th Congress advocating for this bill ahead of its reintroduction, asking members to sign on as co-sponsors. The House bill was introduced with 9 bipartisan cosponsors. Congressman Ellzey (R-TX-06) signed on as a co-sponsor within days of the introduction of the bill, after NNWO met with his team in May to convey the importance of this legislation. Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC) is reviewing the legislation as well, after President Nygren and NNWO staff met to discuss the bill with his staff in July.

A copy of the bill text and additional information can be found [here](#).