



Tackling Public Safety Challenges with BADGES Act

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Southwest is tackling public safety challenges in Native communities with the *Bridging Agency Data Gaps and Ensuring Safety* (BADGES) for Native Communities Act.

On February 4, 2025, Senator Catherine Cortez (D-NV) introduced [S.390](#) (BADGES for Native Communities Act) with co-sponsors Senator John Hoeven (D-ND), Senator Ruben Gallego (D-AZ), and Senator Mike Rounds (R-SD). This bipartisan bill revises federal policies relating to information sharing, reporting, and investigating missing and murdered Indigenous persons (MMIP) cases. It requires the United States Department of Justice to establish a grant program for tribes to enhance their response to MMIP cases and death investigations. It also requires federal training resources and culturally appropriate wellness programs to be available for tribal and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) law enforcement officers. The bill ensures that the Department of Interior establishes a five-year demonstration program that conducts background checks for BIA law enforcement applicants.

On February 5, 2025, Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernandez (D-NM) introduced identical [H.R.1010](#) (BADGES for Native Communities Act) with co-sponsors Congressman Dan Newhouse (R-WA) and Congresswoman Sharice Davids (D-KS). Both versions of the bill share the similar goals of improving coordination between tribal and federal law enforcement, closing data gaps on missing or murdered Indigenous persons, and enhancing support for Tribal police forces. One distinction in the House bill is its call for the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct studies on the handling of evidence, response times, and investigative procedures across federal agencies. It aims to provide additional oversight and transparency.

Together, these bills represent a coordinated response to the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous people (MMIP), a tragedy compounded by decades of jurisdictional confusion, underfunding, and lack of data. S.390 was read twice and referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs. On March 5, 2025, the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs ordered the bill to be reported favorably without amendment. H.R.1010 was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary, Committee on Energy and Commerce, Committee on Natural Resources, and Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

The BADGES for Native Communities Act seeks to ensure Native communities are safer and more empowered in their pursuit of justice. Both versions of the bill have gained bipartisan momentum, suggesting a promising path forward.