



NNWO Advocates on Parity for Tribal Law Enforcement Act



Navajo Police Department officers pictured with their unit in Kayenta, Arizona. Photo courtesy of the Navajo Nation Police Department.

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Navajo Nation Washington Office continues to advocate for the Parity for Tribal Law Enforcement Act (H.R. 4712/S. 2452) in conversations with congressional leaders and Navajo Law enforcement. This week, two additional members signed on as cosponsors following NNWO’s engagement.

The Parity for Tribal Law Enforcement Act seeks to address the staffing shortages common to law enforcement in Indian Country. It would recognize Tribal law enforcement officers as federal officers, giving them access to stronger benefits and removing the need to obtain Special Law Enforcement Commissions to enforce federal laws. Expanded benefits—including federal pensions, death and injury coverage, and legal protections—would strengthen recruitment and retention, helping Tribal law enforcement agencies stay competitive.

State, county, and local law enforcement agencies often have greater resources, enabling them to offer higher pay, stronger benefits, and improved work-life balance. These advantages many Tribal departments cannot match. As a result, Tribal agencies face chronic understaffing, heavier workloads, and higher rates of burnout, resignations, and early retirements. The bill would also removes the requirement for Tribal officers to reapply every five years for a Special Law Enforcement Commission, a burdensome process that can leave officers sidelined if the Bureau of Indian Affairs fails to process applications on time.

This legislation builds on a similar measure introduced by the Washington State delegation in the 118th Congress but incorporates changes recommended by the House Committee on Natural Resources. The current version makes participation optional for officers and allows them to purchase credit for prior service, which were two key revisions from the previous bill.

NNWO has spent the 119th Congress strongly advocating for this bill. In the past week, Senator Gallego (D-AZ) and Senator Cortez Masto (D-NV) became the first Senators to sign on as cosponsors following NNWO's outreach to their offices over the summer. With their support, the Senate bill now has three cosponsors. On the House side, Congressman Jake Ellzey (R-TX-06) added his support less than a week after introduction, following NNWO's engagement with his team in advance. With his addition, the House bill now has five new cosponsors, bringing the total to 14.

A copy of the bill text and additional information can be found at: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/4712>