



NNWO Advocates on Parity for Tribal Law Enforcement Act



Navajo Police Academy Graduates Take Their Oaths. Photo Courtesy of OPVP.

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Navajo Nation Washington Office is continuing to advocate for the Parity for Tribal Law Enforcement Act (H.R. 4712/S. 2452). Our advocacy work has brought on seven additional members of Congress as co-sponsors!

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 tribal officers to secure Special Law Enforcement Commissions to enforce the federal laws that govern Indian Country.

Many law enforcement agencies at the State, county, and even local levels have more resources and are able to offer better salaries, competitive benefits, and better work/life balance. Unfortunately, tribes often don't have the resources to provide these benefits, which can cause understaffing in agencies. Low staffing numbers at tribal agencies lead to heavier workloads on existing officers, which in turn leads to burnout and resignations or early retirements, exacerbating the staffing crisis. The Parity for Tribal Law Enforcement Act's expansion on benefits—which include access to federal pensions, death and injury benefits, and legal protections—would help bolster recruitment and retention efforts and ensure that tribal law enforcement agencies can remain competitive in those recruitment efforts. The bill additionally eliminates the need to reapply for a Special Law Enforcement Commission by tribal officers every five years, a burdensome process that can force officers out of the field if BIA does not process the application in time.

NNWO has spent the 119th Congress advocating heavily for this bill. This past week, Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC) signed on as a co-sponsor, after NNWO met with his staff several times, including a visit by President Nygren. This is a notable step, as Senator Tillis has had a hold on all bills related to Indian Country in order to advance his Lumbee Recognition Act. With his blessing, the Parity for Tribal Law Enforcement bill will move forward in the Senate once a vote is scheduled. On the House side, NNWO has been working to build support amongst the members of the Committee on the Judiciary in order to see the bill advanced through that committee.

The Parity for Tribal Law Enforcement Act is an important piece of legislation that will benefit officers across Indian Country, and ensure that officers can afford to live, work, and raise families in the communities they themselves were born and raised in. NNWO continues to advocate on the bill, and we look forward to working with our Congressional partners to see it become law.

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