

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business federation representing the interests of more than three million businesses of all sizes, sectors, and regions, as well as state and local chambers and industry associations, and dedicated to promoting, protecting, and defending America's free enterprise system, supports S. 209, the "Indian Tribal Energy Development and Self-Determination Act Amendments of 2015," which was passed by unanimous consent in the Senate yesterday.

The Chamber established the Native American Enterprise Initiative (NAEI) in recognition of the revolution in entrepreneurship occurring amongst the nearly three million people of American Indian and Alaskan Native heritage. Drawing on the Chamber's record of business advocacy, the NAEI seeks to remove legislative and regulatory roadblocks to their economic success. S. 209 would be an important step in furthering efforts by Congress to encourage economic development throughout Indian Country.

Much like the Chamber-supported H.R. 538, which passed the House with bipartisan support on October 8th, S. 209 would make further headway toward American energy independence while also providing much needed employment in tribal communities and hard-stricken regions of the country. Specifically, both bills include provisions that would streamline the regulatory process as well as authorize tribes to enter into agreements to conduct demonstration projects promoting biomass energy production on Indian forest land.

Importantly, S. 209 would also streamline the process for Secretarial approval of tribal energy resource agreements (TERA), bolstering tribal sovereignty and self-determination. Since the passage of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which authorized TERAs, there has yet to be a TERA signed due to the lack of clarity – as well as regulatory red-tape – in that Act, which this bill addresses.

Both S. 209 and H.R. 538 include important Indian energy reforms that would empower tribes. The Chamber urges the Senate and House committees of jurisdiction to work together towards a compromise as expeditiously as practicable.

Sincerely,



R. Bruce Josten