

The Native American Enterprise Initiative (NAEI) is the natural outgrowth of two groups with increasingly convergent goals: the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Indian Country. A quiet revolution of entrepreneurship and economic diversification continues to expand and provide growing opportunities for tribes and their tribal members. At the same time, this renaissance presents an increasing set of challenges for tribes and tribal enterprises.

NAEI seeks to capture this opportunity in our nation's economic future and extend the Chamber's advocacy to include this emerging sector of our economy. Drawing on the Chamber's long-standing track record of successful business advocacy, NAEI provides value to Indian Country by removing legislative and regulatory roadblocks that hinder economic success.

### Legislative Agenda

NAEI's Leadership Council develops the policy priorities of the Initiative. Some of the issues NAEI staff advocate for during the 114th Congress follow:

- **Energy Development**—Rep. Don Young (R-AK) introduced a bill to facilitate the development of energy on Indian lands. H.R. 538 would be an important step in furthering efforts by Congress to encourage economic development throughout Indian Country by fostering tribal sovereignty and eliminating cumbersome federal bureaucratic processes. In the Senate, Chairman John Barrasso (R-WY) introduced S. 209, which would, among other things, streamline the process for approval of tribal energy resource agreements, bolstering tribal sovereignty and self-determination.
- **Tribal Sovereignty**—The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has increasingly encroached upon tribal sovereignty with uncertain claims of jurisdiction over tribal business and government operations, even when those enterprises are located entirely on tribal lands. Court challenges have produced mixed results, and the time is ripe to pursue a legislative remedy. Both Rep. Todd Rokita (R-IN) and Sen. Jerry Moran (R-KS) have introduced bills (H.R. 511 and S. 248) that aim to solve this problem.



- **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**—With extensive regulatory power, EPA’s overbearing approach to Indian Country is particularly inappropriate. Curbing increasing regulations from EPA would accelerate permitting processes and devolve authority and sovereignty back to tribal governments.
- **Land Into Trust**—In the wake of the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Carciere v. Salazar*, many bills have been introduced in the House and the Senate to amend the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 to authorize land to be taken into trust for tribes federally recognized after 1934. NAEI believes that S. 1879, the Interior Improvement Act, provides the best path forward while respecting a tribe’s sovereign status.
- **Trust Asset Management Reform**—The federal government’s management of its trust responsibility is eroding. This detriment to tribal economic development was recognized by, among others, the Secretarial Commission on Indian Trust Administration and Reform, commissioned by the Department of the Interior, in its 2013 evaluation of the department’s management and administration of the trust administration system. Both the House and the Senate are considering proposals to devolve the authority to manage trust assets to the tribes, granting local control that would lead to greater tribal economic development.
- **Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act**—Reauthorization of NAHASDA is a Chamber priority. Bills in the House and the Senate seeking reauthorization would represent a positive step toward removing roadblocks to economic success in Indian Country. They include provisions that would streamline the approval and administrative processes, consolidate the environmental review process, and establish a HUD-Veterans Affairs supportive housing program for Native American veterans. The bills would also help facilitate construction in Indian Country, producing jobs and increasing household income.
- **Taxation**—Congress is engaged in an extensive debate over the future of the U.S. tax system. This debate presents opportunities to address inequalities and deficiencies in the tax code for Indian Country, for example, the treatment of tax-exempt bonds issued by tribal governments.

For more information on NAEI’s legislative activities, visit [www.uschamber.com/programs/native-american-enterprise-initiative/letters-hill](http://www.uschamber.com/programs/native-american-enterprise-initiative/letters-hill).

