

ALASKA NATIVE WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER



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H.R. 1652 (S. 611) VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act of 2021 (VOCA Fix Act) heads to the President.

On Tuesday, in a rare bi-partisan support of 100-0, the Senate approved S. 611 the “VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crimes Fund Act of 2021.” Since the original act’s inception in 1984, Tribes were left out of direct access to these funds. Beginning in 2018, American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) Tribes were included on a yearly basis to access these funds. With the passage of this law in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, tribes are moving closer to equity with the federal and state governments in direct access to resources.

“Such historic Tribal inclusion in the Victims of Crime Act as an authorized government to receive these funds is long overdue. It upholds the federal government’s trust responsibility to assist Indian tribes in safeguarding the lives of Indian women as victims of crimes,” said Tami Truett Jerue, Executive Director, AKNWRC. “The tribal provisions will allow Tribes to continue building critical programs and infrastructure to support crime victims with the assurance the funds will be available year to year. We thank Senator Lisa Murkoski for her steadfast support in making necessary corrections to this law and her continued support.” Jerue further said.

The Indian Law and Order Commission report sent to Congress November 2013 stated that Alaska Native women are over-represented in the domestic violence victim population by 250%, and while Alaska Natives represented 19% of the state population, they are 47% of reported rape victims.

“Recognizing that Alaska has the highest per capita crime rate in the country and the unique circumstances of Alaska’s geographical and jurisdictional landscape, this funding is critical to our communities to build the local support and response systems we need to have in place to ensure our tribal citizens have access to the victim services they need,” said Tlingit & Haida President Richard Chalyee Éesh Peterson.

“With consistent and predictable funding support, we can work closely with Alaska Native tribal governments to educate about how this funding can help build local capacity for important services which will help to remove barriers to victim safety, especially in rural, remote Alaska

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Native villages across the state,” said Jerue. “The passage of this act changes the landscape for AI/AN crime victims.”

About the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center

Organized in 2015, the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center is a tribal nonprofit organization dedicated to ending violence against women with Alaska's 229 tribes and allied organizations. AKNWRC board members are Alaska Native women raised in Alaska Native Villages and have 141 years of combined experience in tribal governments, nonprofit management, domestic violence, and sexual assault advocacy (both individual crisis and systems and grassroots social change advocacy at the local, statewide, regional, national and international levels), and other social service experience. AKNWRC's philosophy is that violence against women is rooted in the colonization of indigenous nations.