



Native American Contractors Association

Working to enhance the economic self-sufficiency of America's indigenous peoples

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For Immediate Release

Native Leaders Testify Before Congress on the Essential Role, History and Value of Native 8(a) Enterprises

WASHINGTON, DC (April 7, 2011): Representatives of some of the nation's leading Native organizations will testify before the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs today on the critical importance of continued Native Enterprise participation in the Small Business Administration 8(a) Business Development Program.

"The United States has assumed a trust relationship with the indigenous, Native people of our nation," stated Lance Morgan, Chairman of the Native American Contractors Association (NACA), in prepared written testimony. "This trust relationship carries with it the responsibility to help ensure the economic sustainability of Native communities wherever possible." Mr. Morgan continued: "[B]ased on this trust relationship and recognition of the social and economic conditions plaguing Native communities nationwide, Native Enterprises were included in the 8(a) program." He added, "Now is not the time to further dilute or eliminate a program that is improving the quality of life of Native people."

Today's hearing, entitled "Promise Fulfilled: The Role of the SBA 8(a) Program in Enhancing Economic Development in Indian Country," will feature witness testimony from a number of prominent Native leaders and representatives of Native Enterprises. In addition to Mr. Morgan, hearing participants will include, among others, Julie Kitka, President of the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN); Jackie Johnson-Pata, Executive Director of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI); The Honorable Chief James Allan, Tribal Chairman of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe; and Larry Hall, President of S&K Electronics Inc.

In his remarks, Mr. Morgan addressed how the 8(a) program is improving Native communities. "Native 8(a) contracting directly supports the efforts of Native communities to address and reverse the social consequences of poverty," he stated. "As future generations benefit from resources provided by the 8(a) program, more Native people will go to college, earn degrees and return to their home communities to lead these Enterprises and promote continued economic development within their state. This is precisely what Congress intended by including Native Enterprises in the 8(a) program."

Ms. Kitka of AFN stated: "SBA 8(a) contracting has created the benefits that it was intended to create. Our corporations have built up a capacity that did not exist before. ... They have helped create an economic stability where none existed before. Our people take pride in this work, and feel strongly that this is our work, not the work of others. It is an accomplishment to behold, one which is worth understanding in full for its roots, path and basis in law, including Native American law."



Mr. Morgan noted the recent efforts by some in Congress seeking to restrict Native 8(a) participation. “Frustratingly, now that some Native 8(a)s are finally succeeding, some would use that success to bar the door to others,” he stated. “The growth of Native 8(a) contracts indicates Native participation in the 8(a) program is working.”

NACA’s Chairman explained that while some Native Enterprises are just now experiencing success in the 8(a) program, significant work lies ahead to lift the economic condition of Native people. “Native Enterprises are just now getting a foothold in the federal marketplace after being left out, locked out, and elbowed out for decades,” he stated. “With some modest success, Native 8(a)s now represent a small slice of the total procurement dollars; yet however small, their work is beginning to have a substantial impact in their Native communities. The positive impact of 8(a) is already evident; however, creating economic self-sufficiency for tens of thousands of Native people will take considerable time.”

NCAI, in its prepared written comments, stated: “The Native 8(a) program demonstrates Congress’ commitment to promoting tribal self-determination and self-sufficiency. This business development program reflects the unique character of Native communities and their responsibility to provide governmental services and other benefits to their members. ... Today, the trust relationship is carried out through the U.S. Constitution and the many statutes enacted by Congress, including the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) and the Native 8(a) business development provisions.”

Mr. Morgan also addressed why Native Enterprises require special considerations within the 8(a) program. “ANCs, Tribes, and [Native Hawaiian Organizations], by definition, are small minority businesses because their owners are collectively one of the most egregiously disadvantaged populations in America,” he added. “Until Native economic opportunity improves dramatically, Native access to 8(a) contracting must be protected.”

He concluded: “Now is not the time to roll back years of socio-economic progress – progress that has already taken too long to occur. The Native 8(a) Program has resulted in just what Congress intended -- building stronger Native communities that have been devastated by economic distress. The Native 8(a) program is a rare federal program that works by providing incentives that stimulate economic development in Native communities, diversifying Native economies, and providing revenue for scholarships, training and encourages entrepreneurship in Native communities.”

Click [here](#) for the complete written testimony of NACA, AFN and NCAI.

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The Native American Contractors Association (NACA) is a national Native advocacy organization based in Washington, DC. NACA represents and serves Tribal, Alaska Native Corporations (ANCs), and Native Hawaiian Organizations (NHOs) across the nation on issues relating to the economic self-sufficiency of America’s indigenous people, focusing on our members’ participation in government contracting and the Small Business Administration’s 8(a) Business Development Program. NACA’s members represent over 475,000 Tribal Members, Alaska Native Shareholders, and Native Hawaiians.