



Missing, murdered Indigenous peoples' crisis to be addressed

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.— Members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council expressed appreciation on the passage of *Savanna's Act* by the U.S. House of Representatives on Sept. 21. *Savanna's Act* directs the Attorney General of the U.S. Department of Justice to begin addressing missing or murdered Native Americans on a countrywide scale through Tribal consultation and the development of inter-agency case management and reporting protocols. The same day, the House also approved the *Not Invisible Act* which creates the U.S. Department of the Interior and the USDOJ joint commission on reducing violent crime against Indians.

“As Navajo leaders, we hear, all too often, the tragic stories of our missing or murdered Diné [Navajo] relatives,” Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty stated. “*Savanna's Act* recognizes that a deeper change is needed throughout all levels of law enforcement in order to establish justice for our people.

“The Navajo Nation joins all Tribal nations in pushing for the systemic changes necessary for equity and parity in cases involving Native American people.”

‘Savanna’s,’ ‘Not Invisible’ Acts pass

Written by Staff Reports

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The bill is named for Spirit Lake Sioux Tribal member Savanna LaFontaine-Greywind from North Dakota. Savanna was murdered in 2017 while pregnant with a daughter. The responses by local public safety officials and law enforcement agencies was scrutinized for a lack of responsiveness and coordination once Savanna’s immediate family reported her missing.

“The job of addressing missing and murdered Diné relatives is never-ending and is something that requires our collective efforts to reverse the violence inflicted on and within Native American tribal communities,” Crotty stated. “Survivors and families of countless missing and murdered should have a space at the center of the federal, state, local and Tribal efforts.

“These families are supported by volunteers and community groups doing the best they can to address the missing and murdered crisis throughout Indian Country. I continue to call on the federal government to establish permanent funding that will sustain wraparound services to aid survivors and families.”

Savanna’s Act directs the USDOJ to establish a training program at all levels of government, including Tribal law enforcement, to identify and record Native American victims in federal databases.

The USDOJ is also directed to provide more extensive and targeted outreach to the public and Tribal organizations in the use of the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System and other portals.

The Act establishes additional directives to the USDOJ to develop public websites for law enforcement agencies to share strategies and models for implementing the guidance developed to address missing or murdered Native Americans.

Federal law enforcement agencies are also directed to begin collecting and tabulating data directly related to missing or murdered Native Americans on an annual basis. This data will also include the number of cases and reports that develop over a years-long period to track the effectiveness of the USDOJ’s revised protocols.

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Savanna’s Act further establishes grants for implementing guidelines and creates a Tribal consultation process to aid in guideline development.

“The passage of Savanna’s Act is a major milestone in the pursuit of justice for our Native American relatives that are missing or were victims of murder,” Speaker Seth Damon said. “Too often, cases involving Indigenous peoples don’t receive the same level of attention from law enforcement agencies.

“These systemic issues require an extensive amount of evaluation and consultation, and we, as Navajo People, are ready to engage in this process of creating a more accountable and responsive law enforcement system,” he continued.

“The increased federal support is welcomed. However, we still need to tackle this issue from a community lens and honor the work of the families and advocates,” Crotty said. “As a Navajo leader, I will call for accountability to ensure we are taking a well-rounded and comprehensive approach to this crisis.”

Delegate Crotty is a co-founder of the Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives grassroots collective of volunteers working to establish a data institute, create programming surrounding awareness and prevention, promote community healing and provide policy recommendations to Navajo leadership.

Both *Savanna’s Act* and the *Not Invisible Act* must now be signed by President Trump to become law.