

### Top Indian Country Priorities at Conference:

- **Conservation Title:** All provisions requiring alternative funding arrangements and tribal parity in eligibility for conservation program resources
- **Forestry Title:** Tribal parity in Good Neighbor agreements and P.L. 93-638 tribal self-determination in forestry management
- **Nutrition Title:** All Food Distribution Programs on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) program administration improvements including the P.L. 93-638 self-determination demonstration project for food procurement, match and carry-over funding authority, and local food inclusion in the food package
- **Research Title:** All provisions that create improved access to the Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program (FRTEP) and to education by supporting Tribal Colleges and Universities and other educational institutions
- **Rural Development Title:** All provisions that improve tribal access to rural development business programs and infrastructure funding
- **Miscellaneous Title:** Retain Office of Tribal Relations in the Office of the USDA Secretary and ensure that the beginning farmer and rancher and socially disadvantaged producer programs have permanent authority and funding

### Conservation Title and Forestry Title:

#### *Improving Conservation Program Access and Tribal Forestry Management*

#### **Senate Bill Sec. 2503(c) –Alternative Funding Arrangements to Support Tribal Access to Conservation Programs**

This provision requires the Secretary of Agriculture to work with tribal producers and provide alternative funding arrangements for two essential conservation programs: Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). This change is important as it requires the Secretary to provide tribal producers full access to EQIP and CSP programs while working within effective and traditional tribal agriculture structures and systems of cooperation.

#### **House Bill Secs. 8401 and 8402 – Improving Tribal Forestry Stewardship and P.L. 93-638 Tribal Self-Determination Management**

Section 8401 makes important changes to the Tribal Forest Protection Act of 2004 (TFPA) to expedite and improve the USDA review/approval process for tribal stewardship contracts. As long-sought by tribes, Section 8402 would encourage USDA and DOI to enter into P.L. 93-638 Tribal Self-Determination contracts with Indian tribes to assume management functions for federal forests that are subject to TFPA authority. Both provisions support strong tribal management and self-determination in protecting the health and effective use of forest lands in and near Indian Country.

### **Combine House Bill Sec. 8331 and Senate Bill Sec. 8624 – Tribal Parity in Good Neighbor Agreements**

Tribal parity on par with state governments in Good Neighbor Agreements is sought by many tribes. These provisions would acknowledge tribal sovereignty and promotes cooperation between all forest owners and managers.

### **Nutrition Title:**

#### *Furthering Tribal Nutrition Programs and Access to Traditional Foods*

### **Senate Bill Sec. 4102(b) – P.L. 93-638 Tribal Self-Determination for FDPIR Food Procurement**

The establishment of demonstration projects for P.L. 93-638 Tribal Self-Determination contracts to procure foods for Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) packages is an important step forward for tribal self-governance at USDA. This provision would allow tribal organizations to provide cost-effective and appropriate foods for tribal citizens who rely on FDPIR, while promoting efficient access to healthy, traditional, and Native-produced foods.

### **Combine House Bill Sec. 4005 and Senate Bill Sec. 4102(a) – FDPIR Carry-Over Funding and Matching Requirements**

These provisions have the strong support of the 276 tribes utilizing the FDPIR program and the over 100 tribal organizations administering it. Both provisions allow for two-year carry-over funding for long-term planning and ensure the continuation of the FDPIR in uncertain budgetary seasons. Further, the Senate language sets the FDPIR tribal match requirement at 20 percent, allows for a waiver and full USDA funding if the match causes a substantial hardship, and allows tribes to leverage other federal funding sources to reach the match requirement.

### **Rural Development Title:**

#### *Building Rural Tribal Infrastructure and Economic Development*

### **Senate Bill Sec. 12514 – Establishment of Technical Assistance Program**

Establishing a permanent office providing technical service and assistance across all RD funding authorities, via a cooperative agreement with USDA, would help with two major issues of access to RD programs in Indian Country: the complexities of lending and infrastructure establishment in Indian Country and the trust responsibility of the federal government to tribes to support the need to establish technical assistance interventions.

### **Senate Bill Secs. 6201, 6205, 6209, et al. – Supporting Refinancing for RD SUTA Loans**

The current Substantially Underserved Trust Areas (SUTA) designation for several of the RD programs provides tribes with priority to obtain important water, electric, and broadband infrastructure loans. These new provisions allow USDA to refinance these often decades-long loans to adjust to economic and governmental realities while protecting repayment obligations.

### **Senate Bill Sec. 6104 – Tribal College and University Essential Community Facilities**

Both the Senate and House bills reauthorize this vital program, though its funding would be cut in half by House Bill Section 6207. Tribes have long-supported the language adopted by the Senate that would maintain the funding that supports Tribal Colleges and Universities and helps build tribal communities.

### **Combine House Bill Sec. 6209 and Senate Bill Sec. 6107 – Water Systems for Rural and Native Villages in Alaska**

Both of these sections reauthorize this essential water system infrastructure program for Alaska Native Villages. Tribes in Alaska have lent strong support for the language adopted by the Senate that includes administrative eligibility for tribal consortia (with a 2 percent set-aside for the consortia).

### **Senate Bill Secs. 6206, 6207, and 6305 – Supporting Tribal Broadband**

Broadband connectivity in tribal communities, especially in rural areas and in Alaska, are among the lowest rates in the United States. Tribes have advocated for these Senate provisions in order to provide specific tribal priority, inclusion, and access to broadband programs to connect and build infrastructure and development opportunities in Indian Country.

### **Research Title:**

*Education and Research for the Next 7 Generations in Tribal Agriculture*

### **Senate Bill Secs. 7414 and 7419 – Parity in Access for Tribal Colleges and Universities**

One of the biggest changes in the 2018 Farm Bill is to provide parity in access to education and research funding for Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) after years of inequitable funding. Section 7414 makes 1994 Land Grant TCUs eligible for McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Act funds to educate the next generations of tribal foresters. Additionally, Section 7419 provides access to TCUs to both the Children, Youth and Families at Risk (CYFAR) Program and the Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program (FRTEP), improving the outreach of these programs in Indian Country.

### **Combine House Bill Sec. 11204(b) and Senate Bill Sec. 7118 – Wokini/New Beginning**

Indian Country will support language that combines both House and Senate provisions establishing the Wokini/New Beginning Initiative with mandatory funding for scholarships for Native students to attend 1862 Land Grant Institutions and to include 1994 TCUs funding eligibility as well.

### **The Miscellaneous Title**

*Opportunities, Outreach, and Upholding the Government-to-Government Relationship*

### **Senate Bill Sec. 12304 – Tribal Advisory Committee**

This provision establishes a new Tribal Advisory Committee through the Office of Tribal Relations to provide advice to the Secretary on tribal related issues and policies throughout USDA. This provision enjoys the strong support of tribes.

### **Tribal Opposition to House Bill Secs. 11204(a) and 11203 – Maintain the Office of Tribal Relations in the Office of Secretary**

Tribal governments, as sovereign nations, have a direct government-to-government relationship with the federal government which serves as the basis for the federal trust responsibility. With strong tribal support, the 2014 Farm Bill codified the Office of Tribal Relations (OTR) as a separate, direct reporting office within the Secretary's office to acknowledge the USDA role as a trustee to tribal nations. When USDA announced its recent reorganization of the OTR and held both a consultation and public comment period, tribes, tribal leaders, and tribal organizations across Indian Country spoke out against USDA efforts to downgrade OTR. The House provisions would codify these efforts. Instead, tribes will strongly support retaining OTR's statutory authority as a separate office within the Secretary's Office to acknowledge the federal trust responsibility and government-to-government relationship.



**Senate Bill Sec. 12301 – The Combined Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach**

This provision combines various programs for historically underserved and socially disadvantaged producers, including outreach and assistance programs for beginning and military veteran farmers and ranchers, and creates permanent, mandatory baseline funding for these programs. Additionally, in response to tribal requests, the provision expressly makes tribal governments and producers eligible for grants under these programs and includes tribal information in the reporting on the program.

**Senate Bill Sec. 10111 – Legalizing Hemp Production with Tribal and State Regulatory Plans**

Section 10111 makes hemp farming legal, embodying the principle of tribal parity that allows tribes, on par with states, to develop plans regarding hemp production. This provision would provide many tribes and tribal producers the opportunity not only to enter into hemp production but allow for its tribal regulation, which is a strong recognition of tribal sovereignty and self-governance.

**For more information, please contact:**

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