

Senator Cantwell Highlights Urban Indian Organizations in Senate Committee on Indian Affairs Oversight Hearing on VAWA

Category: Policy Blog

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On December 8, 2021, the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs (SCIA) held an [oversight hearing](#) on “Restoring Justice: Addressing Violence in Native Communities through VAWA Title IX Special Jurisdiction.” Focusing on the successes and challenges of Title IX of the 2013 Violence Against Women Act (VAWA 2013), the hearing coincided with the committee’s release of the Reauthorization draft text.

When Congress passed VAWA 2013, it included a provision for Indian Tribal governments to exercise criminal jurisdiction over certain non-Indians who commit domestic violence against Indian victims on Tribal lands or violate qualifying protection orders. Although VAWA 2013 has been instrumental in these cases, there remain impactful jurisdictional gaps such as, being able to prosecute crimes against children, dating violence, sex trafficking, as well as co-occurring crimes such as assault on a law enforcement officer or DUI.

During the hearing, Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) brought to light the work of urban Indian organizations (UIOs) regarding Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP). Many UIOs conduct home visits and are at the front-line to identify domestic violence and other risk factors for MMIP. The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) has been [advocating for MMIP efforts](#) and urban Indians to be included in the VAWA reauthorization to strengthen these critical services provided at UIOs for AI/ANs.

VAWA Hearing on Heels of Recent EO from Biden on MMIP

On November 15, 2021, President Biden signed [Executive Order 14053 \(E.O.\)](#) on Improving Public Safety and Criminal Justice for Native Americans and Addressing the Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) during the White House Tribal Nations Summit. NCUIH is pleased to see that the E.O. specifically mentions the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Secretary of the Interior conferring with UIOs on developing a comprehensive plan to support initiatives related to MMIP. We are also pleased to see that the E.O. highlights the need for improved data surrounding this crisis as it relates to urban Indian communities. NCUIH has voiced the importance of gathering more data on these communities, specifically on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.

- [Policy Blast: President Biden Highlights Urban Native Americans in Executive Order on MMIP and in Tribal Nations Progress Report](#)