

[NCUIH-Endorsed Bill Reintroduced to Improve Access to Critical Medical Supplies for American Indians and Alaska Natives](#)

Category: Policy Blog

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On January 4, 2022, Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Representatives Ruben Gallego (D-AZ) and Tom Cole (R-OK) [reintroduced](#) the *Tribal Medical Supplies Stockpile Access Act* ([S. 3444/H.R. 6372](#)). This bipartisan, bicameral legislation would guarantee that the Indian Health Service (IHS), tribal health authorities, and urban Indian organizations (UIOs) have access to the Strategic National Stockpile, a federal repository of drugs and medical supplies that can be tapped if a public health emergency could exhaust local supplies. The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) welcomes the reintroduction of this important legislation to provide critical resources to UIOs amid the current pandemic and future public health emergencies.

“We are encouraged by the leadership of Senator Warren, Representative Gallego, and Representative Cole to increase health care access for American Indians and Alaska Natives through the Strategic National Stockpile. As the coronavirus continues to have greater impacts, Congress must do everything possible to uphold its trust responsibility to Indian Country by providing appropriate resources. The stockpile is designed for those who need it most in times of emergency and Indian Country should not be left behind,” **said Francys Crevier (Algonquin), Chief Executive Officer, NCUIH.**

NCUIH supported the original legislation that was [introduced](#) in March 2020 by Senator Warren and remains unchanged in the reintroduction. Other organizations that support the bill include the National Indian Health Board, the National Congress of American Indians, United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund, Seattle Indian Health Board, and the Friends Committee on National Legislation. This bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions and currently awaits further consideration.

- [Bill Text \(S. 3444\)](#)
- [Bill Text \(H.R. 6372\)](#)
- [Senator Warren’s Press Release](#)
- [Representative Gallego’s Press Release](#)

Background

Currently, Indian Country’s access to the Strategic National Stockpile is limited and is not guaranteed in the statute. NCUIH has [advocated](#) for UIOs to have access to the National Strategic Stockpile in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. In April 2020, NCUIH and other National Native

organizations sent a letter to Members of both chambers of Congress outlining a joint COVID-19 recovery legislative proposal which included a request to include Tribal and UIO access to the Strategic National Stockpile.

- [Letter from NCAI, NIHB, NCUIH, et al to House Leadership re: COVID-19 4th Package](#) (April 15, 2020)
- [Letter from NCAI, NIHB, NCUIH, et al to Senate Leadership re: COVID-19 4th Package](#) (April 15, 2020) Link to NCUIH blog post

On June 18, 2020 the Center for American Progress, a Washington DC based think tank, [released](#) a report on the COVID-19 response in Indian Country and included recommended policy solutions for better funding and supporting IHS, such as providing all Indian Health Service/Tribal Health Program/UIO facilities access to the Strategic National Stockpile and Public Health Emergency Fund.

- [“The COVID-19 Response in Indian Country” Report](#)