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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6450

LORETTA A. TUELL, MAJORITY STAFF DIRECTOR
DAVID A. MULLON JR., MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

August 15, 2011

Dear Tribal Leader:

The Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005 (VAWA) expires on September 30, 2011. VAWA contains provisions important to Native communities. These provisions provide critical resources and tools to Indian tribes to respond to domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking.

Native women suffer from violent crime at a rate three and a half times greater than the national average. Nearly 40 percent of all Native women will experience domestic violence. One in three Native women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime, and seventeen percent of Native women are stalked each year, twice that of other populations. I believe reauthorization of VAWA is critical to improve safety for Native women.

To begin consideration of the VAWA reauthorization, the Committee on Indian Affairs held a hearing, "Native Women: Protecting, Shielding, and Safeguarding Our Sisters, Mothers, and Daughters," on July 14, 2011. Please find attached a discussion draft of VAWA amendments that will continue to assist Native communities in protecting and empowering Native women. This draft is being released to seek tribal input to ensure that Native provisions are fully considered as the VAWA reauthorization moves through Congress.

This draft bill recognizes and strengthens concurrent tribal criminal jurisdiction to investigate, prosecute, convict, and sentence both Indians and non-Indians who assault Indian spouses, intimate partners, or dating partners, or who violate protection orders, in Indian country. The bill improves the ability of tribes to respond to sex trafficking and strengthens accountability, coordination and consultation with federal agencies.

Please submit any comments or suggestions in writing by September 6, 2011, to comments@indian.senate.gov. You can contact Erik Stegman or Wendy Helgemo at 202-224-2251 with any questions.

Aloha pumehana,



DANIEL K. AKAKA
Chairman