

**STATEMENT OF  
WIZIPAN GARRIOTT  
PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR INDIAN AFFAIRS  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS  
UNITED STATES SENATE**

**JULY 19, 2023**

Good afternoon, Chairman Schatz, Vice Chairman Murkowski, and members of the Committee. My name is Wizipan Garriott, and I am the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior (Department). Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding S. 2088, Wounded Knee Massacre Memorial and Sacred Site Act.

In October 2022, the Oglala Sioux Tribe and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe of the Cheyenne River Reservation (Tribes) acquired approximately 40 acres of land in Wounded Knee, South Dakota. The lands are significant to both Tribes as more than 300 Lakota people were lost at the site in 1890. The Tribes acquired the land from private owners and plan to maintain the site as a memorial and sacred site protected from commercial development.

S. 2088 directs the Secretary of the Interior, within one year, to complete and make any corrections to the survey and legal description of the land and any other necessary actions for the land to be held by the Tribes in restricted fee status. S. 2088 defines restricted fee status to mean that the two Tribes retain ownership of the land, the lands are part of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and subject to civil and criminal jurisdiction of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, cannot be transferred without the consent of Congress and the Tribes, is not subject to State or local taxation, and is not subject to any law requiring the review or approval of the Secretary of the Interior for the Tribes to use the land as allowed by the covenant the Tribes entered into on October 21, 2022. The use of the lands is limited by S. 2088 to those outlined in the October 2022 covenant, which states the lands will be held and maintained as a memorial and sacred site without commercial development, and the lands cannot be used for gaming activities under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act.

The Department supports S. 2088 as it aligns with the Administration's commitment to restore Tribal homelands. The Tribes will have more authority to honor and protect the Wounded Knee site.

Chairman Schatz, Vice Chairman Murkowski, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide the Department's views.