

PANEL ON NATIVE EQUITIES IN THE 118TH CONGRESS

TUESDAY, JUNE 20, 2023

U.S. SENATE

Committee on Indian Affairs

Washington, D.C.

A panel discussion was held June 20, 2023, at 1:00 p.m. HST, at Kilohana Plantation Estate, Ballroom A and B, Lihue, Hawaii.

Present: Moderator, Jennifer Romero, Breann Nu'uhiwa, Lenna Aoki, Manu Tupper, Darren Modzelewski, Amber Ebarb, Jacqueline Bisille, Nick Matiella.

Moderator: Hi, everyone, this panel is -- I will have the distinct pleasure of -- you can all take a seat. I will have them all introduce themselves. These are the members of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs from both Senator Murkowski's and Senator Schatz's office.

Before I turn this over to the panel, I will share a really quick story. One of the lessons that I have learned from Senator Murkowski as I was the [indiscernible] and we worked with lots of advocacy in Washington, D.C. What I learned from Senator Murkowski is that even when she had her mind made up about where she was going on legislation, she always made sure that people who were coming to her, and in this case, we were asking for her support of the Native-Hawaiian Language Bill. She was sure to ask me if folks from the Alaska Federation of Natives were supportive of that bill.

So she was my teacher and mentor to say, she was sure that her constituency was in support of all the asks that were being made of her. It was a great lesson for me as somebody who was going to Washington, D.C. on the value of the kind of partnership between two Senators, that before, even though I knew she was supportive of the Native Language Bill, she was sure to make sure that I was reaching out to constituents, her constituents, so that we were always partnered together.

So that is something I will always remember about Senator

Murkowski and her wonderful partnership in always supporting Hawaii and Hawaii to Alaska.

Without further ado, I am going to turn it over, I think we have the leader of the committee chiming in from Washington, D.C., who will be joining us. And I will have them all introduce themselves and turn it over to them to talk about what they are working on, and some major legislation that they are focused on today.

Thank you for being here, and I will turn it over to you, Breann.

[Applause.]

[Remarks off mic.]

Speaker. Is Jennifer going to be joining us?

Speaker: Yes.

Ms. Romero: I am here, can everyone hear me?

[Simultaneous conversations.]

Ms. Romero: Hello, everyone. I am participating virtually from Washington, D.C. I understand that we are all systems go here. So I can begin my presentation. Excellent. Thank you so much.

Welcome, everyone. My name is Jennifer Romero. I am the staff director and chief counsel of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. I represent Brian Schatz, the senior Senator from Hawaii and chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian

Affairs. Thank you so much for joining us on today's panel discussion entitled Native Hawaiian Equities in the 118th Congress.

I am sorry I am unable to join you all in person. I am missing all the fun and all the talk story happening in the hallways. But we have several committee staff joining you today in person. I would like to go down the line and introduce everyone individually.

Representing Chairman Schatz and the Democrats on the committee, I have Breann Nu'uhiwa, who is the Deputy Staff Director; Lenna Aoki, who is the General Counsel for the majority on the committee; Darren Modzelewski, who is the Policy Advisor; and Manu Tupper, who is the Legislative Assistant and the Press Secretary.

Representing Vice Chair Murkowski, the senior Senator from Alaska's staff, Republican committee staff, we have Amber Ebarb, who is my counterpart, that is the staff director for the Republicans on the committee; and Jacqueline Bisille, who is the Policy Advisor for Senator Murkowski.

Again, thank you so much to CNHA for the kind invitation and for hosting this conference. I also want to thank Michelle for her time for moderating. We really appreciate the opportunity to speak with you all today. I know you have a lot of options in this breakout session, so thank you for your

interest and participation.

With that, I will begin the slide show presentation. We have slide two -- if you could pull that up. Right. If everyone can see that.

I wanted to give just a brief overview of the Senate and the committee structure. You will see there in the graph, the Senate, just sort of a 101 civics lesson, just a reminder that Congress is comprised of two bodies, the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Senate is called the upper chamber. It is comprised of 100 Senators, two representing each State, including Hawaii, as you know. Each of these Senators serve six-year terms. Both Senator Schatz and Senator Murkowski were just reelected last year, so they have another six years under their belt, thankfully.

Each of the 100 Senators serve on committees. Committees are essential to the operation of the Senate as a whole. Through the committee's investigations, hearings, and other events, the committees gather information on national and international problems within their jurisdictions.

The chair of each committee and a majority of its members represent the majority party. In the 118th Congress, the Democrats are the majority party.

The chair, Chairman Schatz of Hawaii, controls the committee's business. So when we say we represent the majority,

that is what we mean.

Each party, the Democrats and the Republicans, assigns its own members to the committee and the majority party controls its business.

So when a Senator introduces legislation, and you will see that in the graph, with the circle, that bill, that piece of legislation is referred to the relevant committee of jurisdiction for consideration. If that bill is taken up and approved by the committee, the bill is sent to the full Senate for further discussion, amendments, and voting. So that is the introduction of a bill and the role that the committee plays in reviewing that bill.

Slide three, you will see in the United States Senate there are 24 committees. Sixteen of the committees are standing committees. Four are called special committees, and four are joint committees. In the slide, you will see that Indian Affairs is listed.

In slide number four, if we can move on, the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs is a standing committee which means it is a permanent body with jurisdiction to draft, consider, and recommend legislation to the full Senate. That is who we are and what we do.

In slide five, you will see a little bit of background on the committee. The committee was initially established as the

Select Committee on Indian Affairs. But it was made permanent in 1984. Our jurisdiction is very broad. We have jurisdiction over American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian matters generally. That jurisdiction includes many things: lands, economies, education, housing, self-governance, health care. We will go through a few more of those issue areas later on in the presentation.

Moving on to slide six, what kind of work does the committee do? Whenever a bill triggers the Indian Affairs Committee's jurisdiction, a determination is made by the parliamentarian of the Senate, and it is referred to our committee for further discussion by the committee.

The committee selects these bills and gathers input from executive agencies and other experts through formal hearings and other official events. It meets to perfect the bill through amendments and then sends the bill to the full Senate for further consideration.

What other work do we do? In slide seven, you will see that the committee, in addition to its broad jurisdiction over legislative matters, we also manage confirmation of Presidential nominees. For instance, we confirmed just this Congress the Commissioner for the Administration on Native Americans. We also as a committee consider treaties and international agreements.

We also hold oversight hearings. Oversight hearings are different than legislative hearings. This is when we focus on implementation and investigation of existing Federal laws and programs, or generally matters that affect Native communities. By way of example, during COVID times, we had several oversight hearings about the impacts of COVID-19 on Native communities across the Country.

Finally, the committee launches investigations of suspected wrongdoing. We have that authority, but it is very rarely used.

So now moving on to the issue areas in our committee, as I mentioned before, our committee's jurisdiction is very broad. We have jurisdiction over land and natural resources. And you will see on the slide examples of what those are: leasing and financing, water and energy. And on the next slide you will we also have jurisdiction over matters of Native self-governance, self-determination, civil rights, and voting. Public safety is also a big issue area that we dive into. Law enforcement and courts, violence against women, homeland security and FEMA matters as well as military and veterans affairs.

So all of these issues really come up in a variety of ways, in a legislative hearing or in an oversight capacity.

In the next slide, you will see we also have examples of where we have jurisdiction over economic development matters and infrastructure. The big ones are housing, telecommunication,

and transportation. We do a lot of work in those spaces.

And last but not least, in the next slide, you will see there are social issues that we have jurisdiction over: languages, culture, arts, tourism. We have a lot of these social issues that are just really pressing in Native communities across the Country, and we do a lot of work in those areas.

But in particular, I want to highlight the Native Hawaiian and Alaska Native issues, because there are unique impacts to these particular Native communities as compared to what we call the lower 48, which is the continental United States. For instance, we take a hard look at Hawaiian Home Lands as they affect the Hawaiian Islands, as well as the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

The other matter that I want to end with is cultural patrimony. These are international issues. This is when cultural items are held by foreign governments or individuals. Congress passed a law last Congress that would prohibit the export for sale of cultural patrimony, cultural items that are sacred to Native communities in the United States.

With that, that is just sort of an overview of the committee, our legislative work, our oversight work, the issue areas that we grapple with on a daily basis.

I want to hand it over to my colleague, Amber, to talk

about the membership on the committee, as well as the leadership of Brian Schatz and Lisa Murkowski. Take it away, Amber.

Ms. Ebarb. Thank you, Jennifer. My name is Amber Ebarb. I am the Minority Staff Director for Vice Chairman Lisa Murkowski. I am Tlingit from Alaska, raised in Anchorage, and my Tlingit name is Gin Du Tlaa. I am a member of the L'eeneidi clan in Alaska. My family is from Hoonah, and my father is a member of the Wooshkeetaan clan, so that makes me a child of Wooshkeetaan. I just wanted to introduce myself and my background before I launch into the substance of the committee.

Jennifer went over the topics and the issue areas and the history. But I think the membership of the committee is just as important. So we can jump to the next slide, which gets to the members, the Republicans and the Democrats who are currently on the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

So in this slide, you can see the six Democrats and the five Republicans. On the left is Chairman Schatz, and on the right is Vice Chairman Lisa Murkowski. Each Congress, Senators make a choice on which committees they would like to serve on. Senator Murkowski, for her entire time in the Senate, has selected the Indian Affairs Committee, because she considers it one of the most important committees in the Senate, given the substance that we address, and all the issue areas that Jennifer went over.

On the Republican side, we have a number of Senators from the west, and similarly, on the Democratic side, we have a number of Senators from the west. But unique to our committee, the Alaska-Hawaii connection is very important to understand. Throughout the history of the Senate, we have had a priority of educating our colleagues about Federal Indian law and policy.

But just as important as understanding the uniqueness of Alaska Native issues and Native Hawaiian issues, because they are distinct from Indian Country issues and the traditional Indian law and policy issues that some of our experts in the field of Federal Indian law are more familiar with. So while we educate our peers and our colleagues and Congressional staff about Indian lands and people and the Federal trust responsibility, we also do that work as it relates to Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians.

Another thing that we are very focused on in the 117th and the 118th Congress, I started on the committee two years ago, in the 117th Congress when Senator Murkowski became Vice Chairman. We sat down and wanted to strategize with Chairman Schatz about what the priorities would be for the committee. One of the values that we have, and Senator Murkowski has set out for her staff that we try to follow is this commitment to bipartisanship and making sure that we make good policy for all Native people, American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian peoples.

So we are continuing on that. And as Chairman Schatz charts the path for the direction of the committee, we like to do that in a collaborative fashion with our counterparts, Jennifer, and all of my colleagues here. We have a very good collaborative relationship for a Senate committee. We are always looking for the path of common ground that benefits the most Native people.

I think that takes me to the next slide, which is a little bit of an exploration of the current Senate Committee on Indian Affairs leadership, Vice Chairman Lisa Murkowski and Chairman Schatz. We have focused over the last couple of years on, at the beginning of the 117th Congress, we focused on COVID relief and economic development and the Violence Against Women Act, infrastructure investment, and making sure that Indian Country, Native communities, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians were not left out of any of those opportunities as they moved forward throughout the Senate and through the House. We are proud of our accomplishments, and I will talk about many of those things.

It also brings me back to this longer-running relationship that we have with Hawaii. One of the things that I was marveling with my colleagues and my friends in southeast Alaska, last week was the launch of the Polynesian Voyaging Society's Moananuiākea Voyage, which started in Juneau. They did a heritage voyage up to Yakutat, and commemorated the gifts from

the SeaAlaska Corporation, which is the Alaska Native corporation for the Tlingit Haida and Tsimshian people, created after ANSCA in 1971. I am from southeast Alaska, as I mentioned earlier. Some of my friends were involved in the donation of the two logs that were used for the Hawai'iloa in the 1990s.

So we were very honored to be a part of that, this return back to Juneau and southeast Alaska. I think it is a really strong demonstration of the kinship and the friendship and the bond that we have from Alaska and Hawaii. I want to thank everyone who has been following that. I think it is so important that we are committed to understanding each other and building on that longstanding friendship that we have with each other.

And another one that Lenna and I talk a lot about is the Native languages, and our efforts for revitalization. We have had a number of Native language teachers come up to, back to Alaska after going to Hilo and learning about language programs and revitalization efforts and teaching. So we are very grateful for the learning and the knowledge that has been shared. X'unei Lance Twitchell is one of the leaders in Alaska on Native language revitalization.

So we are very grateful for this connection that we have. It is something that is cultural and personal, but it also plays a role in the way that we interact on the committee, and the

connection that we have, and our commitment to advancing good policy.

With that, I will turn it over to Lenna to build on some of this historical relationship between Alaska and Hawaii.

Ms. Aoki. Hi, my name is Lenna Aoki. I have been on the committee for quite a while, and one of the topics that I wanted to talk about a little bit was the history. When I first joined the committee, it was actually was at the very end of Senator Inouye's chairmanship of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. After doing some other work, I came back and I was also with Senator Akaka when he was chair. And I am now with Senator Schatz.

So the State of Hawaii and the Hawaiian people have a very, very proud history at the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, and a very unique contribution in that Hawaii is the only State where three of our chairs have been from the State of Hawaii since the founding of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs as a permanent committee.

When I look back at what Senator Inouye was able to do, very groundbreaking accomplishments. I think it is for the first time that many people even understood the relationship between indigenous people in the United States and that American Indians and Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians shared very strong traditions, cultures, and experiences. Some of the

remarkable things that he was able to accomplish included the Native American Language Act, which was really for the first time the U.S. had a policy in favor, in support of Native languages, instead of the policies that they previously had which were really policies to destroy and undermine Native Hawaiian languages, other Native American languages and culture.

The other thing that I wanted to talk about a little bit is that the tradition of having the committee be bipartisan was very much championed by Senator Inouye. As many of you know, one of his best friends in the world, including in the Senate, was a Senator from Alaska by the name of Senator Ted Stevens. So I think he naturally understood the importance of bipartisanship, but particularly when we are talking about Native American issues.

A lot of people think that there are many people out to get Native Americans or Americans Indians, Alaska Natives, or Native Hawaiians. My experience has been more of benign neglect when it comes to the Congress, the Senate and the House. I think what Senator Inouye was able to do was really turn that around. And he turned it around in allowing some of his measures to be heard by the Senate and by the House, but also by being a great advocate within the Senate, within the walls of the Senate, so not just in public hearings and forums like that.

He also traveled all over Indian Country, all over Hawaii

and Alaska, so that he was able to learn as much as he could. He was very proud of having so many listening sessions. And he was very famous for just letting people talk. From a staff perspective, this was a very unwanted situation, because we would be there for hours and hours and hours. Though he had a bladder made of steel, all of us did not share that quality.

[Laughter.]

Ms. Aoki. But he was known to hold six, seven-hour listening sessions all around the Country.

To bring it forward a little bit to Senator Akaka, as many of you know, the only Native Hawaiian to serve in the Senate and to serve in this position of great honor, to be the chairman of the Indian Affairs Committee. He was really an ambassador, I think, for Native Hawaiian culture before joining the leadership of the committee.

But certainly while he was there, every time we had a hearing or an event, he stayed for sometimes an hour afterwards to greet all of the panelists, and any of the Native peoples that had traveled from all over to come to Washington, D.C. I think the true affection and the love and the feeling of community that he inspired was very important and he brought a lot of Hawaii and aloha to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

The other thing I want to mention is that he really changed

the narrative of the way that really in the Federal context we discuss Native Hawaiians. Prior to his chairmanship, there were a lot of people and a lot of individuals who would always say Native Hawaiians were different, they were separate, they are not like Indians, they are not like Alaska Natives. There was no government. So since the government had not been reorganized, they weren't a tribe, and therefore they weren't worthy of any programs or activities of the Federal Government.

He completely turned that on its head. He stated very clearly that Native Hawaiian people and the Native Hawaiian community were federally recognized by the Federal Government as a people, as a community, and that there was a Federal trust responsibility going back hundreds of years. The same Federal trust responsibility that was talked about in the context of the Constitutional power for Congress to make plenary, to make laws affecting Indians and Native Americans, the same trust responsibility that the Federal Government and its bureaus and agencies and those entities owe, it is very much the same as to what the Native Hawaiian community is owed by the Federal Government.

And so I think that when we talk about whether or not there are differences between Native Hawaiians, yes, there is a difference because there has not been a reorganized tribal government. But that impacts only one part of the Federal

relationship, and that is the government-to-government relationship. And most of the programs, the Federal programs that benefit Indians and Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians, are based on the trust responsibility. So whether it is education or housing, social services, health, all of those things are based on the trust responsibility.

So I think that Senator Akaka was really able to change the narrative and talk about American Indians and Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians in the same breath. It made a difference, I think, over time with his colleagues. It has now become really the policy of the Federal Government in statements by the Department of Justice, by the Department of Interior and various agencies. That is the narrative; that is the narrative when it is used about Native Hawaiians.

Finally, just to say a few words about Senator Schatz, I think he came at a time when a lot of things had changed. So the great leaders that we had from Hawaii and the power that they held in terms of their tenure, in terms of their committee jurisdiction, their assignments, the last couple of years even with Senator Inouye and Senator Akaka, those powers had diminished.

So I think what Senator Schatz has really brought to the Indian Affairs Committee and really brought forward a lot of the issues with Native Hawaiians is parity, parity in treatment. It

is not a question of whether or not Native Hawaiians deserve this or that vis-à-vis American Indians and Alaska Natives. There is no argument. Now the goal and his actions are based on achieving parity when appropriate. It is not always appropriate, because Native Hawaiians have not reformed a government. But in every other instance, when it is appropriate, he has been the champion, as have the other delegation members of Hawaii, to try to move forward Native Hawaiian issues.

I will turn it over to Manu, who will talk about some of the specific accomplishments and some of the things we have been able to do together as a committee.

Mr. Tupper. Thank you so much, Lenna. That is a really hard act to follow.

I will kind of dive into what has been accomplished for the Native Hawaiian community over the last two and a half years since Chairman Schatz, or I should say Senator Schatz, took the gavel, and Senator Murkowski took the vice chairmanship. I will also just add that a lot of this work would not be possible without the support of folks throughout the committee. As Amber said, we really work together. We have our Democrat hats and our Republican hats, but on the committee, and especially under the leadership of Senators Schatz and Murkowski, we are really all working in the same direction to make sure that the Native

Hawaiian community has the Federal resources that it is owed.

So Dasan, if you wouldn't mind going to the next slide, I will go through a couple of them. And the next one, please. Perfect.

So I think it is really important to highlight that over the last two and a half years, we have been able to, yes, us all working together, but under Senator Schatz's and Senator Murkowski's leadership, we have been able to really shepherd through the most dedicated funding ever for the Native Hawaiian community from the Federal Government.

As Lenna mentioned, there are sort of three pillars that we think about when it comes to Native Hawaiian-serving programs. There are others throughout the Federal Government, but there is Native Hawaiian education, Native Hawaiian health care, and Native Hawaiian housing funding that are sort of these three pillars. Over the last two and a half years, we have gotten millions, hundreds of millions of dollars for these initiatives. So as you see on the slide up ahead, \$200-plus million for Native Hawaiian education, including \$170 million for the Native Hawaiian Education Program. That is not including additional funding for Native language revitalization, for which Hawaiians have secured a lot of funding as well.

Almost \$70 million for Native Hawaiian health care. That is Papa Ola Lōkahi, the Native Hawaiian health care systems, but

in addition, other organizations that serve Native Hawaiian health needs in the behavioral health space, just kind of across the health care space.

We were able to get almost \$55 million for Native Hawaiian housing. That is for the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, but also CNHA was also hugely instrumental in administering or helping to put out \$5 million in emergency rental assistance funding. That came about due to the pandemic. But really, kind of set an example for what the Native Hawaiian community can do given resources from the Federal Government.

We also got DHHL access to a couple of new programs at the Department of Treasury, including for homeowners assistance. That came about as a result of the pandemic as well.

Then also I just wanted to highlight that there were \$2 million that the Native Hawaiian community got through the NATIVE Act, which Senator Schatz introduced and saw passed into law in 2016. This funding is kind of changing the game for Native Hawaiian tourism, cultural tourism opportunities, and sort of building on the work that is coming all from you guys to really make sure that visitors coming to Hawaii aren't just visiting a place, they are visiting a place with people, with history, with culture and are helped to understand that.

Next slide, please, Dasan. We also were able to see a bunch of new dedicated funding for the Native Hawaiian community

over the last two years. So \$90 million for broadband deployment on Hawaiian Home Lands, making sure that Native communities are connected and able to use high-speed internet. Twenty-five million dollars for Native Hawaiian climate resiliency and adaptation funding for the first time ever. That came about through the Inflation Reduction Act. I think this is sort of one of Senator Schatz's priorities as well, to make sure that we are listening to Native communities who have lived on their lands for thousands of years who best know how to live in the environments that they are from.

We were able to secure new public safety resources as well, \$3 million for a new Native Hawaiian Resource Center on domestic violence, and additionally a technical fix to make sure that Native Hawaiian organizations are able to serve Native Hawaiian survivors in their own communities.

Senator Schatz and Senator Murkowski also were very pleased and proud to see two landmark Native languages laws that they introduced and cosponsored enacted into law. That is the Native American Language Resource Center Act, which sets out to create a resource center that is national to help Native communities glean best practices for Native language revitalization. As Amber mentioned, a lot of that work has been done back in Hawaii, particularly at UH Hilo. We were really excited to see that go through.

They also were able to get passed the Durbin Feeling Native American Languages Act, and that sort of follows up on what Lenna had mentioned, the Native American Languages Act which passed in 1990 and redirected the policy of the Federal Government to really support Native language revitalization. Since that time, over 30 years ago, there really hasn't been a Federal evaluation of the state of Native American language revitalization and really how those Federal resources and Federal tools are helping to do that work. So we are excited to see that health check of the Native language revitalization efforts really being carried out.

And then additionally, we were able to get passed new behavioral health resources for Native communities. This is a new program, not currently funded, but really a foot in the door to make sure that the whole Federal Government, including the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the Department of Health and Human Services is doing work for Native communities.

I think for the Native Hawaiian community, this new authority is important from a parity aspect as well. This new resource is meant to serve American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. As Lenna was mentioning, there are of course cultural differences, there are differences in political status between and amongst these communities. But a lot of times there

are similar issues that American Indians and Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians face.

So I think we are building on, we hope to build on this new authority, hope to get funded and really, with your help hope to have a successful model for deployment of these resources for the Native Hawaiian community.

Then from a committee standpoint, we have been really pleased under Senator Schatz's and Senator Murkowski's leadership to have welcomed over 20 Native Hawaiian witnesses and panelists to testify and participate in committee hearings and roundtables over the last two and a half years. I think this really speaks to Senator Schatz's prioritization of amplifying Native Hawaiian voices in relevant and meaningful ways.

And I just want to say that yes, representation is hugely important. It is important at the Federal level for folks to be reminded that Native Hawaiians are a part of the conversation. I think also those witnesses, those panelists that have appeared before the committee, they have led to other substantive policy-making improvements. I am going to cite the example of Mark Patterson, who is the administrator for Kawaihoa Youth and Family Wellness Center. He came and testified before the committee during our public safety hearing last May. As a result of his remarkable work in this space, and we got to also

visit with him at his facility, he was able to be appointed to the Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention as a representation of Native Americans on this council. This appointment is made by the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs Chairman with the concurrence of the Vice Chairman.

So I just wanted to bring up that example to demonstrate that it is not just lip service, it is not just having people come and talk before the committee and then they go home and we go about our business. I think a lot of this participation is really informing the work that we all do as staff and that our bosses do as members.

Thank you so much. I will pass it off to Breann, who will be covering what we are doing in the committee this Congress and going forward.

Ms. Nu'uhiwa. Aloha mai kākou. I am Breann Nu'uhiwa, and actually, this is the point at which we transition to some of the big pieces of legislation that we are working on currently. So I think it would be a good breaking point if folks have questions about the overview that we just gave of who we are, what we do and what we have been doing up until this point. We are happy to take any questions that anyone may have.

Speaker. [Remarks off mic] Thank you guys for everything you are doing [indiscernible] all the way out of [indiscernible]

it was never [indiscernible] Congress the power to grant [indiscernible]. Is there any conversation about [indiscernible]?

Ms. Nu'uhiwa. I will say the answer to that question is always yes. That conversation is always at the forefront in terms of understanding the very unique situation of Native Hawaiians. There is an apology resolution acknowledging the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom.

And I have worked in this space, specifically in the governance and recognition space, for many years now. My observation, having worked in the Native Hawaiian community, having worked in the Federal Government now, is that these are all conversations that should be robust and ongoing at the same time. Because the question of international law is something that should be pursued.

But while that is being pursued aggressively, there is also the question of what the Federal Government has done, things described in the apology resolution and elsewhere that has been acknowledged. There is funding, there are programs that are meant to address some of those actions and to leave all of those on the table while pursuing another legal conversation to me is something that gets the Federal Government off the hook a little bit in a way that we as a committee try to make sure is not happening in terms of the Federal Government's responsibility,

its trust responsibility as Lenna described, to ensure that its interaction with the Native Hawaiian community is a fiduciary relationship, is an interaction with the Federal Government, is always seeking activities and actions in the best interest of the Native Hawaiian community. That is a big part of the role that we play here.

But those big governance questions, I will say, as you can imagine, the Native Hawaiian community is not alone among Native communities in looking at the way the Federal Government has interacted with the community in terms of land, in terms of political authority. So these are questions that are not only happening in the Native Hawaiian space, they are happening elsewhere as other Native communities try to understand their political position vis-à-vis the United States, within the international community.

So it is our position that all those conversations should be ongoing and happening at the same time. While conversations are happening between the Native Hawaiian community, in the international space, we work at the Federal level to ensure that the Federal conversation doesn't get dropped and that those responsibilities and those resources don't get fall through the cracks while folks are having important conversations about other spaces and other authorities.

Moderator. Breann, thank you so much for that explanation.

Super clear. And also to just say that, I want to add to that that CNHA has always been an advocate for engaging at the Federal level. And I will say, it is not either/or, it is both/and, that we need to pursue both/and, to Breann's point, that there are many other efforts going on as well.

But the United States does have a responsibility for what you described because of the illegal overthrow. So do we just walk away from that completely and say, you did bad and we are pursuing something else? I think it is both/and. Thank you for that very thorough answer and explanation.

Other questions? And I will walk to you with the mic so the rest of the audience can hear. Does anybody else have - thanks.

Speaker. Quick question. I am from Oregon. I have lived on the continent for over 35 years now, originally from Honolulu. This is the first time that I have heard from representatives about the synergies between Native Americans, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians working together in government. I love the way you broke it down.

How does someone like me, in my first couple years being involved in Hawaiian Civic Club, how can I share this, what you shared with us? How do other people that are not at convention, that don't have access to attend sessions like to hear this story and be able to connect to it and kind of trace our lineage

back through? I am thinking, wow, I remember when Akaka was in office, I remember when Inouye was in office, and I wasn't even living in Hawaii.

So being able to connect to it that way I think is really important to me. But I am thinking about, how can other people identify with this. I have nieces and nephews who were born in the diaspora. They know nothing of their Hawaiian-ness, because they don't live, they haven't lived on the islands. So maybe this is a way that they can get engaged, especially for, I mean, my nieces and nephews are older now. But [phrase in Native language] coming up now, how can we engage them to be more active in this space, even though they may not feel like they belong in this space, to have this kind of voice, unless it comes with anger and awareness of injustice.

You know what I mean? I think there is something missing there, and how can we work together to market this in a different way, this side of this? That is one of my questions.

Ms. Nu'uhiwa. I am actually going to turn that over to our moderator, because we actually anticipated that there might be questions about how to become more engaged. I think you saw when Amber was going through the list of Senators who sit on our committee that there are representatives from the State of Washington, from Nevada, which I know is of particular importance here. So those Senators and their staff bring issues

from their home offices to our committee. We take them very seriously. When there are local issues, we tend to be very deferential to the home State Senators, because they know, and they are connected to community and they understand more than some of us might about what is going on in their areas.

But I think the real point of interaction is groups like CNHA, civic clubs, like you described. It is a community-driven policy engine. We engage those groups, and we engage individual citizens as well and love to hear from the community about different policy needs. But we really do rely heavily on policy experts who are community-connected to bring the issues to us so that we can do our work on the legal level and the policy level.

But we are always deferring to the expertise of the actual community, because we don't want to do something at the Federal level that we think is a great idea from 30,000 feet up, but when we are looking at the ground it is just not going to work for the community, it is not going to address the issue that we are trying to address with it.

So we do defer very heavily to groups that are actually working in that space. I will pass it over to Michelle.

Moderator. Yes, and I think again that is our kuleana. They are carrying their kuleana, they are in D.C. on our behalf. They have done their half.

The other half is that we do our share, that we choose to

engage, that we choose to plug in. Nobody is going to spoon feed to us the information that we need. We have to be engaged.

I think one of the things growing up in Hawaii that we have lost faith because of the illegal overthrow, because there has been a disconnection from 'āina, because there is still a lot of deep, historical trauma, that our notion has been that we disconnect, that rather than leaning in and further connecting, we chose, we chose to disconnect. And we said, politics is not for me, we don't engage in that. Well, when we don't engage, all of the wonderful things that actually happen, we don't know about, we don't learn about. Then we don't lean in.

So the responsibility is back on us. But what is the next 10, 20, 30 years of our lāhui going to look like? They can only do so much. They are doing their part by being in D.C. Now we have to do our part. We need to plug in; we need to understand. And as a result, we will learn more and more about the history, what is happening on the Hill and how we can be a bigger part of it.

So we are not saying -- it is never too late, even if they are grown up. We all have kuleana. Sometimes we choose our kuleana, and sometimes our kuleana chooses us. But it is our turn to lean in so that we can make the changes for our people and for our lāhui that we would like to see.

You were going to say something, Lenna?

Ms. Aoki. Yes, I was just going to add this. One of the things I think is really important is to go to the core, right? What do Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians have in common? Sometimes people use those terms like there really is such a thing as an Indian, which we all know, Columbus didn't know where he was going. So there really isn't something called an Indian. When indigenous people talk about themselves, they don't call themselves an Indian or an Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian. In almost every Native language, they call themselves "the people," right? They don't call themselves a name that was derived from something in Europe or whatever.

So when we think of the Constitution, one of the things that I always recommend to young people or anybody, to think of it very generally, in the Constitution, it has a clause, and it gives Congress the plenary power to make laws regarding Indian tribes. That is the legal term. Indian, as we said earlier, doesn't exist. Tribe is a European word to describe a community of people.

So to break it down, what that really means is, Congress has the power to make plenary decisions, laws, policies regarding indigenous people who formed governments prior to the U.S. Government and exercise sovereignty over lands that are now a part of the United States. If you look at it that way, you don't break it into them, us, we, them, whatever. It is

indigenous people of the United States. And it is because of that political relationship that indigenous people had governments, they formed governments, they exercised sovereignty over their people, over their lands. They made laws with regard to their people and their lands. And that predates the U.S. Government.

So that is the important thing to understand. So whether Hawaii or Alaska became States in 1959 or whatever, there were certain things that applied to that, certain negative aspects, because there were Federal policies that came into existence over time that were more and more and more negative to indigenous people. But really what it is is that as long as those indigenous people, those groups exercised sovereignty over lands that are now a part of the United States, whether they became a part of the United States in 1959 or before, that is the important aspect that we all should look at.

Thank you.

Moderator. Do you have a question? In the front we have another question. Breann, just let me know when should --

Speaker. Thanks for the Schoolhouse Rock-lite version of how a bill gets passed.

Okay, so I have two questions. The first is, can we please extend the [indiscernible] grant until Friday since we are all here and really busy? No? Okay.

Moderator. No.

Speaker. Okay, second question is, the real question is, so super-easy to come and ask us for money, right? You can pull a number out of thin air, like \$6 billion for housing, I need it tomorrow. I think finding out who gets it on our end is easier, if we can mobilize the community. I think the difficulty is, I don't know how to find \$6 billion on the Federal side, and I don't think that is helpful to you folks to just come in with a number.

So I think in terms of, since we are talking about process, would you folks explain how to find the money so that we can be more effective advocates when we make those kinds of asks of you guys?

Ms. Nu'uhiwa. So, there are multiple answers to your question, depending on what kind of money you are looking for. We are going to be talking in a second about three big pieces of legislation that we are working on. The one that I am most actively managing is the Farm Bill process. There has been a real ask from all over the Country, Native communities all over the Country, that exact same question.

We are not even certain we need more money. We can't even find the money that is already there, is what people are telling us. So we are actively trying to work with agencies to develop navigation services, technical assistance, so that there is

outreach to Native communities, saying, hey, are you aware that there is tons of environmental justice money that is specifically for Native communities? Because the answer is usually no. Even when it comes to us, we are pleasantly surprised to hear that there is all this money for Native communities.

So that is a real need. We have identified, not on our own, but with Native communities coming to us, asking us about it. So that is an area we are really trying to work in and [indiscernible] to really maximize the benefit of these programs. Some of that money just goes unspent, right, because it can't get to the intended recipient.

Then beyond that, when folks find the money, we are talking about people who work in those fields, right, people who work in agriculture, people who work in education or health care, they are not professional grant writers. They are competing with the State of California to try to get this money.

So we have heard that as well, we need more technical assistance on grant writing. And then even that compliance, on the reporting that comes with a Federal grant. So those are things we are all very actively working on.

In terms of asks for programs that don't exist, I am a big advocate of just asking. All new programs came from an idea, and the funding gets worked out as we all know. That is

something that happens between Senators, which actually for me raises one more point I wanted to make with regard to Native Hawaiians on the continent. We have two Senators from Hawaii, but they cannot work in a vacuum. So if they are also hearing about Native Hawaiian issues from the Senators from Nevada, from the Senators from Utah, from the Senators from California and Washington State, all of a sudden Native Hawaiian issues are national issues, and national issues get national attention.

So I think that is a very important thing to keep in mind as you are working on advocacy in that space, that there is an actual benefit to having Native Hawaiians active on the continent for Native Hawaiian issues at home and here. So I think those are things I would recommend in working on those issues.

We will go to the next slide and talk a little bit about what we are doing right now. And I am going to pass it over to Darren Modzelewski.

Mr. Modzelewski. Hey, everybody. For those of you who came in a little bit later, my name is Darren Modzelewski. I serve as Policy Advisor to Senator Schatz on the committee. If we could turn to the Indian Arts and Crafts slide, Dasan, yes. I wanted to do a quick review of one of the number of bills we are working on this Congress and sort of actively exploring.

The first one is the Indian Arts and Crafts Act. For those

of you who aren't familiar with it or maybe who haven't heard of it before, the Indian Arts and Crafts Act, or IACA, generally it is a truth-in-advertising law to protect Indian arts and crafts. It was passed in 1935, and part of the purpose of the Act was to promote economic development among Indian peoples. And they used the word "wards," but Indian people and tribes.

Since that, the Act created a board that had a number of authorities. One of them was to issue patents and trademarks of authenticity to protect and acknowledge crafts and arts products of indigenous communities as authentic to prevent counterfeiting. So that is why I say it is often a truth-in-advertising law. The Act is designed to protect against fraud.

Since its passage in 1935, the bill has been amended three times, in 1990, 2000, and 2010. The most recent amendment is actually pretty interesting. The series of amendments to try to update the law, because it was first passed in 1935, so it is a little different concept of what Indian art is, how it operates, who is doing it. In the 2010 amendments, we really sort of looked at enforcement in a very meaningful way and changed the penalties, the civil and criminal penalties. On the criminal side, it increased penalties from \$500 to up to \$5 million, and added jail time up to 15 years, so it took very seriously fraudulent production of Native goods.

Those amendments were trying to update the Act and thinking

about how to do the best they could at the time, over the last four years, the committee has heard quite a bit about the changing landscape of Indian arts, Indian production, Native arts, Native crafts, and the panoply of places where it is sold, how it is sold, how it is produced, the formats that it is produced in. As a result of that feedback, Senator Schatz developed what is called a discussion draft. It goes back to Jennifer's point about one of the roles of the committee in drafting legislation.

So in this case, Senator Schatz has put forward a discussion draft for review by Indian Country, by Native Hawaiians, to try to again update the Indian Arts and Crafts Act to make it more relevant for today. There are a couple of highlights on the screen. The first one I would point out is that it adds Native Hawaiian-produced arts and crafts as an element of protected group of items or objects within the Act. Currently, the Act applies to descendants of Indian tribes. It excludes Native Hawaiians. So this is sort of an issue. You know all the issues on the Islands. The discussion draft inserts and includes Native Hawaiians and Native Hawaiian produced arts and crafts.

The other thing it does is significantly expand the enforcement. In this case, it allows law enforcement officers to issue subpoenas, interact with border patrol and customers to

see vessels that are coming in with fraudulently produced arts and crafts. There is a whole bunch of really kind of interesting things on the criminal side.

Then the last thing I have is that it creates a grant program that would put some of the money that it raises through civil asset forfeiture back into, the way it is drafted, into BIA schools. Once the draft was released, about two months ago, we had a listening session and then took comments from Indian Country until about May 19th.

Tomorrow we are going to have another listening session to hear from you all about the ways the bill can be improved to specifically address issues facing Hawaii, especially with Hawaii being a way point for the importation of fraudulently produced goods, and make sure that the goods and arts that are produced by Native Hawaiians benefit the Native Hawaiian community. So tomorrow will be kind of a neat way for us to learn from you all on how to improve that bill. I can take a question or two, or I can turn it over to Jacqueline and she will talk about the Boarding School Bill that we have been working on.

Ms. Bisille. Thank you, Darren. Again, I am Jacqueline Bisille, Policy Advisor and Press Secretary for Senator Murkowski, who is Vice Chairman on the committee. I will be talking to you about the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian

Boarding Schools Act of 2023.

For the first bullet, this is simply an overview, background and the current status of the legislation. I am not sure if you are familiar with the bill that has been introduced. This will be the third introduction since its first receipt in the Senate in the 116th Congress. It was based off the Federal boarding school policies that the Federal Government instituted in the early 1800s against Native children by forcing them to attend boarding schools, day schools or other sorts of institutions in order to assimilate them from their Native cultures and languages and families.

Going from that, the Federal Government supported or implemented or operated any type of these institutions for nearly 150 years. So we still have a lot of survivors, their descendants and families still living from these schools.

Over time, we know that there is a strong history just by family stories, retellings, and just as a community know that this assimilation process has greatly affected Native people across the Country, in Alaska and Hawaii as well, in the loss of Native languages and cultures, which Congress, as we have previously talked about, has been trying to overturn and reinstitute and build back up, to use Native languages and cultures.

Because of that, also, we kept hearing about the need for a

development of some sort of Federal commission that could continue to look into this more thoroughly. It started with Representative Haaland when she was on the House side, and now Secretary, in a bill that was first introduced in the 116th. Now she has instituted an initiative, probably about two years ago now, that looks into this at the Federal level. So with her Secretarial order the Department began looking into this, and they produced a report last year that started identifying about 408 schools across the Country that had been participants in this assimilation policy.

Building off of that, the bill that she introduced that has also been introduced in the Senate by Senator Warren, builds this Federal commission that is, in conjunction with what Interior is doing. You kind of go into the highlights, which I will jump down to, is the commission is now a five-person commission and has its advisory committees and survivors as well as a Native American and a Federal advisory commission. With the input of this commission, they will build upon, over a number of years, through visitation, testimonials and input received from Native peoples, recommendations that Congress should take in order to help address and heal from the Indian boarding school policies.

Going into what is now introduced, which is S. 1723, Senator Warren introduced it last month with 28 Senators

including Senators Schatz and Murkowski. When it was introduced last Congress, we had what Jennifer went through, is a legislative and oversight hearing on the issue as well as legislation. So with that hearing we had in June, we had a number of witnesses from across the Country, from Alaska, from Hawaii, describe their experiences and how it affected their communities.

With that feedback and advice we received from the hearing, up until about a few months ago, we on the staff, we on the committee as well as our bosses, worked together on how we can improve this legislation to work better. From that hearing in June 2022, the committee had a markup just a few weeks ago on June 7th where a Schatz-Murkowski substitute amendment was switched out for the bill that Senator Warren introduced. That included lots of feedback.

I think this was one of the pieces of legislation, since I have been on committee, where we have had so much input and so much feedback that it took us several months to go through and comb through. We had over 100 comments implemented just for the statement for the record. We had feedback from tribes, Native leaders, tribal organizations, the main organization that is handling it, its nickname is NABS, it is the Native American Boarding School and Healing Reconciliation Coalition, they have been a true leader in trying to move this bill for a number of

years.

So they worked with other stakeholders as well in giving us important improvement on how we can make it better.

We have also worked with the Administration, Interior, as I mentioned. We also had the Office of Native Hawaiian Relations help input on the Native Hawaiian aspect of the report, which identified about 408 schools, as I said, and 7 were found in Hawaii and 21 in Alaska. But we know that that number can be a lot larger. It is just based off the schools that Interior identified in their definition criteria. We know there are more.

I think this is where the important need for the commission is, can we go back to the slide, the need for this bill is, there are not just 21 schools in Alaska. We have heard from our Alaskan stakeholders who have had many say that it is not just the schools that received Federal money, they didn't stay overnight, they went to the day schools or they had some criteria that they couldn't meet so they wouldn't put on that list, but they know that they had some family that had gone to that school or were sent away, even across the Country to Pennsylvania, at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. And maybe they were left there, but they don't know.

Also, we have families that don't even know, but maybe through this work they would be able to identify a family that

have had their Native children buried, and they just couldn't find a gravesite.

So I think the need is very strong and it has been helpful through this feedback we received in updating the text that the committee received two Congresses ago, and we have been working on it immensely over the last two months to create this five-person commission. One of the highlights of the bill is that members for this commission will come from the nominations of the Native communities themselves.

So you have identified leaders probably in your communities who you think would be a great addition to be either a commission member or on one of the advisory committees or subcommittees that we have. From there, you will nominate that person to the Interior and then Interior will compile this full list of who they think would be best suited for these roles. Then that list is sent up to Congress, who will work together in a bipartisan way in fulfilling the roles of each of the commission, committees and subcommittees.

I think this is something that, we keep talking about fulfilling the trust responsibilities, ensuring that it has accurate input, that the responsibilities are carried out in a respectful manner, because you know what is best, you know what is culturally appropriate, you know the dos and don'ts of what will happen during these events.

So I think this is something that we keep reiterating, is that this is a Native commission that was created by Native people in order to fully heal from these atrocities that happened to Native children over many, many years. So we continue to promote the Truth and Healing through this commission to also allow information. We have been hearing through feedback by stakeholders who are already doing work in the field now that they cannot access information adequately or maybe the organization that they want information from can't do it without something called a subpoena.

Without the issuance of a subpoena to these organizations, they are not able to hand over information that might have some information about more Native children that we don't know about, or information that will help the commission in carrying out its roles and developing an initial and final report. So the issuance of subpoenas is something I think was very important to keep in, and also strengthen it so that it can help the commission continue to do what it has been designed to do.

We also heard about something over the last few months, that there was not enough research and behavioral health tribal [indiscernible] care provided, so we have strengthen those provisions to make sure that the researchers can continue to do their work with more support. Also having attended some of the Road to Healing tour that the Administration is doing by

Secretary Haaland and Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, Bryan Newland, that they need actual tribal informed care providers at these testimonials and these meetings, so that if someone is there to testify and you open up to someone so deeply about something that you or your family experienced, you are sharing those stories, it might open up something that you don't know you have within you.

So having that safe space for someone to go to and talk to someone that is trained to do that also helps. I think it continues to help to meet those responsibilities of the commission, providing truth and healing. So providing that truth also gives you that space for healing.

So we designed that to be available for the commission, the commission staff, as well as anyone who comes and testifies at one of the in-person or virtual meeting sites. With the commission and its broad authority to look into the Indian boarding schools, within the first four years they will have to send out an initial report to the public that discusses its findings and its initial recommendations. They will go through regions, as well as to Hawaii and Alaska at least twice. They can meet more if it is necessary, and just inform the public about what they found and receive feedback on what they might be missing, what could make it better. Because there might be something that they just completely missed and that needs to be

included in the report, which would lead to the final report that would be issued within the six years that the commission is established for.

So for the six years in total, it authorizes about \$15 million a year in order to carry out all the duties and responsibilities and purposes of the bill. You will have the time for the initial report, the final report, as well as the meetings kind of described in the bill.

So if you do want to look at the bill thoroughly, you can go to [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov), that is where all the bills we have talked about, you can find them within the last few years, the most current. We are now in the 118th Congress. That bill is S. 1723. It was introduced by Senator Warren, but you also have about 28 other Senators who are on the bill. That will lead you to the text that was passed by the committee. I don't think it is quite up yet, because they are still typing it in. It is a 133-page document.

But it fully lays out the whole purpose, the responsibilities of the commission, nominations, appointments of the commission, and the subcommittees and advisory roles. Then it lays out what the commission is designed to do and requirements for the reporting, meetings and funding, and everything that they need to do.

But we have also left open things they can do on their own,

without specifically saying that you have to do it. So that will be helpful for you to read more thoroughly too. And we are here to answer questions as well.

Ms. Nu'uhiwa. All right. I think two really important things to take away from what Jacqueline just shared. There is going to be an opportunity for very robust community engagement with the Truth in Healing Commission. Take all of those opportunities to propose members for the commission, to propose individuals with expertise for the subcommittees. These are really where those decisions are made, so it is important to have experts from the Native Hawaiian community be a part of that conversation, so that the unique experience of Native Hawaiians in the boarding school process is something that will be addressed.

I think one of the key things that will come out of that commission is bringing a lot of that history into the light. Because when we started the conversation, people were asking questions, well, boarding schools, Hawaii is not the same narrative as the continent, and every place had its own unique narrative. But there were children taken from Hawaii and brought to the continent to go to these boarding schools. Things like that are not widely known. There is a very odd and sinister connection between some of the boarding schools here and things that were being done in Hawaii.

So it is really important for all this information, as Jacqueline was sharing, to come out so that we can begin conversations about how to address that harm. It is part of a bigger effort that our committee has been undertaking for many, many Congresses, but with some extra earnest in the past two Congresses, in terms of intergenerational trauma, in the space of child welfare and domestic violence.

We just had a huge Supreme Court decisions come down in the Indian Child Welfare Act last week. Senators Schatz and Murkowski led the Congressional amicus brief in that case, which we worked on, staff worked on very hard with our outside counsel. Just looking at what was happening at that point in time, the boarding schools were happening at the same time that Native children were being adopted out to non-Native families based on these notions of their being raised in their own culture as somehow being inadequate to them being raised in a Western home.

So those are the kinds of things that we are looking at very actively. That actually persists to this day. When we look at adoption rates and placement of children into foster care, there is still evidence of over-removal of children based on a misunderstanding of even multigenerational homes, that it is an overcrowded home, and not really giving appropriate deference to how a community chooses to live, raise its

children.

So those are issues that we work on every day. And the Boarding Schools Commission is a piece of it. We do a lot of work in that space.

Mr. Modzelewski. Breann raised a very good point about the inclusion from Hawaii and having representation on this committees, subcommittees, advisory committees. One thing that I would flag is that when -- I will be optimistic -- when the bill is enacted, there's a 90-day window to submit those nominations to the Department of Interior. So if you have an interest in doing that, keep an eye out, watch the bill, track the bill. Once it is enacted, there is a 90-day window to submit those nominations. I just don't want you all to miss out on that opportunity.

Ms. Nu'uhiwa. All right. And we will move to our last major piece of legislation that we are working on, which is the 2023 reauthorization of the U.S. Farm Bill. This is a process that comes around every five years, and it has been happening since 1933. It is an agriculture bill, but it really guides everything that USDA does everywhere in all the spaces. Although it is technically an agriculture bill, there are provisions in there that address rural development, telecom, water infrastructure, electricity infrastructure, energy development, clean energy development, climate change,

bioculture ecosystem restoration, everything you can imagine is part of the Farm Bill.

So we have become very engaged. Last iteration of the reauthorization in 2018 was the first time that Native equities were really very seriously considered and meaningfully addressed in the Farm Bill. It just to just kind of be big crops, and that was their bill, and that is what they were working on. But in 2018, the Native Farm Bill Coalition came together and started advocating very strongly for Native-specific equities to be addressed in the Farm Bill. They did a fantastic job. They got over 60 separate provisions for Native communities included in the Farm Bill. Really amazing self-determination provisions like running their own equivalent, basically, of SNAP programs, the FDPIR program, for distribution of food on Indian reservations, really taking control over how communities are fed, other opportunities for co-management of forest spaces. A tremendous amount of progress was made in 2018.

So our hope for this reauthorization is that we will build on that progress. The Native Farm Bill Coalition is now a well-oiled machine. They were a brand-new entity at that time. But of course, at that time, they were just sort of pulling things together from folks who were already working in this space. So Native Hawaiians were not very actively included in the 2018 process for the Farm Bill reauthorization. We wanted to make

sure that was not going to be the case in the 2023 reauthorization.

So we reached out actively to the Native Hawaiian community, to CNHA, to other Native Hawaiian organizations to say, tell us what the stakeholder issues are in the agriculture space, so we can make sure to amplify those issues at the Federal level and make sure we are working with the Native Farm Bill Coalition to ensure that Native Hawaiian equities are also considered when they are out talking to Senators and representatives about the Native equities generally.

So it was an amazing process that to me ties together a lot of what we have been talking about here, where because there isn't a reorganized government, which is usually an easy one-stop shop for us, and we need to know, for example, what are the issues for Nevada Native communities and Nevada will go to tribal governments, and they will come, and they have their various different departments, so they can talk to us about education and health care and agriculture.

With the Native Hawaiian community, all of that mana'o and wisdom is kind of stored in different spaces. So we have to actively go out and find the folks who work on agriculture, to find the folks who work on education, to find the folks who work on tourism, and ask for feedback, so that we can make sure we are doing the right thing on a Federal policy level.

So this was an example of that. CNHA had great connections. We worked with Kamehameha Schools as well that of course works in the agriculture space and has tremendous landholdings. We asked them to please put us in touch with farmers, ranchers, fishermen, everybody who is working in this space, so that we can hear directly from the community about what the needs are in the agriculture space. It gave birth to a beautiful process where there was community engagement, synthesized into policy asks, brought to us. To me it was a really great example of what can be done when folks are active and organized.

So we are in the process right now, Senators Schatz and Murkowski have submitted a list of priorities to the Agriculture Committee, which is a sister committee of ours, on key priorities for both Native Hawaiians and Alaska Natives in the upcoming Farm Bill, and a few that we have identified are equity for Native Hawaiians in program access. As Lenna was saying earlier, parity and equity are words we use often, because there are many programs that Native Hawaiians should be eligible for, but no one has ever taken the time to stand up and say, why not Native Hawaiians also. So we are making sure that in the agriculture space, we are standing up and saying, why not Native Hawaiians also.

So equity for Native Hawaiians and access to the existing

programs at USDA, the grant navigation assistance we talked about earlier, helping someone who is out in the field and has no time to be looking for grants, to find those grants, to apply for those grants and to successfully get those grants. That is something that we have heard from all over the place, not just in Hawaii, and the Alaska Federation of Natives did an amazing job by standing up a grant navigator during the CARES Act process and COVID to help Alaska Native organizations find funding and apply for funding and go after funding. That has been a great model that we are looking toward.

Recognizing traditional ecological knowledge is another thing that we have heard a lot from the Native Hawaiian community, but also from other Native communities, just ensuring that when USDA does its activities that it is making sure that traditional ecological knowledge is appropriately integrated into its standards, what it is requiring, not only of non-Native entities who are doing work that impacts Native communities, but also where Native communities are doing agriculture in a traditional way that might not line up with the Federal standards, that there is accommodation and understanding that that traditional ecological knowledge should be respected and allowed in the process.

Defraying the high cost of shipping, which is something we hear in Alaska and Hawaii often, not just from Native

communities, but from everybody, so we are looking into that, seeing what kinds of solutions we can find there. Waiving cost share and match requirements, there are a lot of entities that could do amazing work and could win a million-dollar grant and do something fabulous with it. But when it requires you match it with a million dollars, they don't even apply.

So there is so much that could be happening that is not happening because of these cost-prohibitive matches that are required. In every space that we can for the past two Congresses, we have been looking to waive those costs so that folks with great ideas can actually get some of this funding and do something fantastic with it.

Then looking at productive repurposing of unused agricultural lands, there is so much of that back home. We are wanting to make sure that that land, that folks have the opportunity to take that land, do restoration, use it for productive purposes as the community sees fit. So that is also another priority that has been raised to us. It is a really interesting space.

I was not an agriculture person when I came to the committee. We all have our assignments in some of those areas we consider ourselves to be experts in and others we do because we have been asked to do them. Agriculture was a space that I came into on the committee. But it has been a really

fascinating space to work in, looking at food sovereignty and the connection between food sovereignty and political sovereignty.

Not to shout out Netflix or anything, but I was watching Taste of the Nation, and they had an episode on Puerto Rico. They were talking about independence. They said, how can we talk about political independence when we rely on the United States for 80 percent of our food? Those are the questions that true independence, true sovereignty, controlling your food, controlling land and spaces, those are the issues that we face and we are looking at specifically in the context of the Farm Bill.

So we are very eager to continue getting feedback from the community. The Farm Bill is still in the process of being drafted. If you have brilliant ideas for us, we love those. Please reach out to any of us on the committee with those ideas.

Those are the three big things we are working on. We will take questions.

Speaker: Hi, I am Leilani from San Diego, born and raised on Oahu. I just want to say thank you for all the work you do. I have my daughter here. She is 13 years old. Even though they learn about how a bill becomes law in fifth grade, sixth grade and seventh grade, so as her mother, even though I live in San Diego, I know it is my responsibility to teach her how to

advocate, even though we are on the continent. I want to make sure she understands the process and the path for Native Hawaiian independence and self-determination.

So your being here and her being able to listen to you folks is a privilege. I thank you for that.

I also want to say, I am a social worker for 26 years, did work in Hawaii. I have been living in San Diego as a social worker, working with kids with severe trauma from birth to age 5. Seventy percent of my caseload is child welfare. And the ICWA bill I have tracked, because for 10 years working in San Diego and seeing those fast adoptions and working with Native American children and thinking about my kuleana as a Native Hawaiian to support other Natives when things are being done unjustly in the child welfare system, it was my duty to speak up and make sure those Native children were protected, no matter where I am.

So I am grateful that you folks are able to advocate and get support. I appreciate you folks for that. Thank you.

Moderator. Thank you all for joining us today. I don't know exactly, does anybody have a time check? It is 2:43, so I think it starts at 2:45, the next workshop. So you have two minutes to go to the next workshop that you are interested in joining. Thank you. Mahalo.

[Whereupon, at 2:43 p.m. HST, the session was concluded.]