

Subcommittee on Indian, Insular and Alaska Native Affairs

Don Young, Chairman

Hearing Memorandum

February 22, 2016

To: All Subcommittee on Indian, Insular and Alaska Native Affairs Members

From: Majority Committee Staff, Subcommittee on Indian, Insular and Alaska Native Affairs (x6-9725)

Hearing: Legislative hearing on H.R. 3477 (Rep. Markwayne Mullin), To enhance and integrate Native American tourism, empower Native American communities, increase coordination and collaboration between Federal tourism assets, and expand heritage and cultural tourism opportunities in the United States. “*The Native American Tourism and Improving Visitor Experience Act*”
Wednesday, February 24, 2016, at 2:30 p.m. in 1324 Longworth HOB

H.R. 3477 (Rep. Markwayne Mullin), “*The Native American Tourism and Improving Visitor Experience Act*”

Summary of the bill

H.R. 3477 was introduced by Rep. Markwayne Mullin on September 10, 2015. The bill would require federal agencies with recreational travel and tourism functions to include Indian tribes and tribal organizations in management plans. Further, the bill requires the Department of Commerce and of the Interior to report on how each department is including tribes to develop Native American tourism plans to improve travel and tourism data collection.

Cosponsors

Rep. Mark Amodei, Rep. Tom Cole, Rep. Kevin Cramer, *Rep. Betty McCollum*, Rep. Kristi Noem, *Rep. Dina Titus*, Rep. Don Young

Witnesses

The Honorable Sally Jewell, Secretary (Invited)
U.S. Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Penny Pritzker, Secretary (Invited)
U.S. Department of Commerce
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Bill Anoatubby, Governor
Chickasaw Nation
Ada, OK

Ms. Sherry Rupert, President of the Board
American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association
Albuquerque, NM

Background

During the first six months of 2015, the Department of Commerce estimated there were over 36 million overseas¹ travelers to the United States.² One out of 18 Americans is employed by a travel or tourism related business.³

In 2014, tourism in the United States was a \$221 billion industry.⁴ According to the American Indian and Alaska Native Tourism Association, there is growing interest in Indian Country as a tourist attraction. According to the Department of Commerce surveys; more than 1.65 million overseas travelers visited Indian Country in 2014, an increase of 10% from the 2013.⁵ Indian communities saw the most travelers from China, the United Kingdom, and France.⁶

Many Native American owned businesses and Indian tribes are using culturally appropriate tourism as an economic development strategy. For example, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe annually conducts hundreds of tours on reservation land for international and domestic tourists. Additionally, the Chickasaw Nation in Ada Oklahoma owns and operates the Chickasaw Cultural Center which has been an integral part of tourism in the state of Oklahoma.

¹ Includes: Overseas, Canada, Mexico and International.

² U.S. Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration, National Travel & Tourism Office.
<http://travel.trade.gov/view/m-2015-I-001/index.html>.

³ 2015 Top Markets Report Travel and Tourism: A Market Assessment Tool for U.S. Exports. Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration, Industry & Analysis. (2015) at 3.
<http://trade.gov/topmarkets/pdf/TravelXandXTourismXTopXMarketsXReport.pdf>.

⁴ U.S. Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration, National Travel & Tourism Office. (2015). Accessed at: <http://travel.trade.gov/outreachpages/downloadXdataXtable/Overseas.pdf>.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

H.R. 3477 would help strengthen coordination and collaboration between federal agencies where tourism programs currently exist without requiring any new appropriations. By removing any silo systems within government, tribes can seek to seize economic opportunities.

The bill is supported by the National Congress of American Indians, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Inter-Tribal Council of the Five-Civilized Tribes, the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association and others.

Section-by-Section Analysis of H.R. 3477

Section 1. Short Title. Provides that the Act may be cited as the “Native American Tourism and Improving Visitor Experience Act” or the “NATIVE Act”.

Sec. 2. Purposes. This section states the purpose of the bill which is to enhance and integrate Native American tourism through Federal agency coordination and collaboration. The bill is intended to facilitate tribal economic development in heritage and cultural tourism by improving tribal self-determination and self-governance and promoting self-sufficiency and Native American communities.

The bill would facilitate an increase in domestic and international visitors to rural and remote Native American communities, provide grants, loans, and technical assistance to Indian tribes and Indian organizations for infrastructure development and tourism capacity, and elevate living standards in Native American communities. The bill would support innovative technology projects that will improve visitor experiences on Federal websites.

Sec. 3. Definitions. Provides definitions for the Act.

Sec. 4. Integrating Federal tourism assets to strengthen Native tourism opportunities. Section 4(a) directs the Secretaries of Commerce and the Interior to update management plans and tourism initiatives to include Indian tribes and tribal organizations.

Section 4(b) directs other heads of agencies with management and tourism initiatives to update management plans and tourism initiatives to include Indian tribes and tribal organizations.

Section 4(c) requires an outline of policy proposals for the Federal Native American tourism plans. The policy outline includes collecting travel and tourism data; incrementally streamlining Federal agencies' maintenance of public records, publications, and websites; creating a better user experience on websites for domestic and international travelers; aligning Federal agency websites and publications; identifying agency programs that support tourism capacity building and that sustain tourism infrastructure for Native American communities; developing website

visitor portals for tourism destinations; developing bilingual interpretive and directional signage that include the local Native American language or languages; improving access to transportation programs to build tourism and trade capacity for visitor enhancement and safety.

This section also directs the Departments of Commerce and Interior to consult with Indian tribes and the Native American community on their inclusion in Federal Native American tourism plans.

Section 4(d) directs the Department of the Interior to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or a cooperative agreement with an entity dedicated to advancing American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian tourism which would be a facilitator between the Secretaries of the Interior and Commerce and Indian tribes and tribal organizations.

The MOU or cooperative agreement will facilitate identifying technical assistance and training areas of participation for Indian tribes and tribal organizations in the tourism industry and provide a means of delivery for technical assistance and training.

Subject to appropriations, the head of each agency, including the Secretaries of the Interior, Commerce, Transportation, Health and Human Services, and Labor, can use any funds made available to the head of an agency for administrative funds for the entity or organization used to facilitate the tourism agreements.

The Secretaries of the Interior and Commerce will develop metrics to measure the effectiveness of each entity or organization.

Section (e) requires the Departments of the Interior and Commerce to submit a report within one year of enactment of this Act to Congress. The report requires an analysis of how both Departments of Commerce and the Interior are including tribes and tribal organizations in management plans and tourism initiatives. The report will also describe how the entities or organizations that enter into MOUs or cooperative agreements are creating participation of Indian tribes and tribal organizations in the tourism industry and the effectiveness of the entities or organizations based on the metrics developed by the Secretaries of the Interior and Commerce.

Sec. 5. Native American tourism and branding enhancement. Section 5(a) directs the heads of agencies to take actions to create display areas and/or events for Indian tribes and tribal organizations. The actions taken by the heads of agencies should support efforts to identify and maintain the local Native American community and should provide authentic and respectful visitor experiences. It directs the heads of agencies to provide assistance on explaining the relationship between indigenous people and the United States and the national identity. The

heads of agencies will promote understanding and respect for diverse cultures and how those diverse cultures relate to the national tourism image of the United States. It allows for the heads of agencies to enter into MOUs with private organizations to display information regarding Indian tribes and tribal organizations for tourists at airports and ports of entry.

Section 5(b) makes grants from the Commission of the Administration for Native Americans, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities and any other agencies administering grant programs eligible for Indian tribes or tribal organizations. The grants are to be used to support Indian tribes and tribal organizations, as the First Peoples of the United States, to use the arts and humanities to celebrate the diversity of the United States.

Section 5(c) directs the Advisory Council of the Smithsonian Institution and the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution to work with Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and non-profit organizations to establish long-term partnerships with museums and organizations not affiliated with the Smithsonian. Through these partnerships, Indian tribes and tribal organizations will share information and conduct research to support tourism for Indian tribes and tribal organizations.