NORTHERN ARAPAHO TRIBE

Office of the Chairman | Northern Arapaho Business Council

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Chairman Groesbeck Calls on Congress to Protect Northern Arapaho Sacred Places and Tribal Consultation

WIND RIVER INDIAN RESERVATION, WYOMING — Northern Arapaho Business Council Chairman Keenan Groesbeck calls on Congress to reject provisions of the proposed federal permitting reform package that weaken historic preservation review, diminish Tribal consultation, or restrict the Tribe's ability to protect places of religious and cultural significance.

The package, introduced as S. 5653, the Bipartisan American Affordability and Jobs Act of 2026, is being advanced using H.R. 2347 as the legislative vehicle. On November 9, the Senate voted 73–25 to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to H.R. 2347. That procedural vote was not final passage of the permitting legislation.

"The Northern Arapaho people have a responsibility to protect our sacred places, our ancestors' resting places, and the cultural knowledge we carry for future generations," Chairman Groesbeck said. "Congress must respect that responsibility and our standing as a sovereign Tribal Nation. Decisions affecting our heritage require direct government-to-government consultation with us."

The Wind River Reservation is the Northern Arapaho Tribe's present homeland, shared with the Eastern Shoshone Tribe. Northern Arapaho cultural and ancestral connections also extend beyond reservation boundaries throughout Wyoming, Colorado, and the surrounding region. Federal decisions affecting those places can have lasting consequences for Northern Arapaho religious practices, cultural resources, and future generations.

The Tribe's November 4 letter to Senator John Hickenlooper formally objected to the proposed historic preservation provisions and requested their removal insofar as they weaken Section 106 review or Tribal participation. The letter also called for suspension of those provisions pending meaningful consultation and for enforceable protections in any legislation Congress advances.

"Our history does not stop at the reservation boundary," Chairman Groesbeck said. "A federal agency cannot replace Northern Arapaho knowledge with its own assumptions about which places matter to our people. Once a burial place or sacred site is destroyed, a later review cannot restore it."

The Chairman calls on Congress to remove the historic preservation provisions in Division B, Title III, insofar as they weaken existing protections; provide the operative bill text and amendments to affected Tribal governments; and allow adequate time for direct consultation before further action. Any permitting reform must preserve early notice, meaningful Tribal participation, protection of confidential cultural knowledge, written responses to Tribal concerns, and effective access to judicial review.

Chairman Groesbeck urges Senators John Barrasso and Cynthia Lummis and Representative Harriet Hageman to oppose any package that diminishes these protections and to meet directly with the Northern Arapaho Business Council. Tribal members and Wyoming residents are encouraged to contact the delegation and ask Congress to protect sacred places and preserve meaningful Tribal consultation.

"The United States must honor its responsibilities to Tribal Nations," Chairman Groesbeck said. "We expect Wyoming's delegation to hear the Northern Arapaho Tribe directly and act to protect the places that sustain our people."

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