

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 989

To establish a Native American language resource center in furtherance
of the policy set forth in the Native American Languages Act.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 25, 2021

Mr. SCHATZ (for himself and Ms. SMITH) introduced the following bill; which
was read twice and referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs

A BILL

To establish a Native American language resource center
in furtherance of the policy set forth in the Native Amer-
ican Languages Act.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Native American Lan-
5 guage Resource Center Act of 2021”.

6 **SEC. 2. PURPOSES.**

7 The purposes of this Act are to further the policies
8 set forth in the Native American Languages Act (25
9 U.S.C. 2901 et seq.) by creating a national resource center

1 and, through such national resource center and actions,
2 to—

3 (1) preserve, protect, and promote the rights
4 and freedom of Native Americans to use, practice,
5 and develop Native American languages (as defined
6 in section 103 of the Native American Languages
7 Act (25 U.S.C. 2902));

8 (2) allow the United States to fulfill its trust
9 responsibility to Native American communities and
10 address the effects of past discrimination against
11 Native American language speakers;

12 (3) support revitalization of Native American
13 languages;

14 (4) encourage and support the use of Native
15 American languages as a medium of instruction, in-
16 cluding use as a medium of education in schools op-
17 erated by Tribes, States, territories, the Federal
18 Government, and Native American language edu-
19 cational organizations;

20 (5) encourage and support the use and develop-
21 ment of Native American languages as the medium
22 of instruction for a wide variety of age levels and
23 academic content areas;

24 (6) support metrics aligned with the Native
25 American language of instruction, including assess-

ments, qualifications, and processes based on well-demonstrated best practices in Native American language medium education;

(7) identify—

(A) barriers to Native American language education and learning within Federal laws; and

(B) actions needed for alignment with the Native American Languages Act (25 U.S.C. 2901 et seq.);

(8) encourage and support elementary schools, secondary schools, and institutions of higher education to include Native American languages in the curriculum in the same manner as other world languages, including through cooperative agreements and distance education, and to grant proficiency in Native American languages the same full academic credit as proficiency in other world languages;

(9) encourage and support the development of appropriate teacher preparation programming for the teaching of, and through, Native American languages, including appropriate alternative pathways to teacher certification;

(10) provide a resource base to provide information to Federal, Tribal, State, territory, and local governments and Native American educational orga-

1 nizations to allow the spread of best practices in the
 2 use, practice, and development of Native American
 3 languages in Native American communities, includ-
 4 ing use in educational institutions;

5 (11) provide a resource base for the use of tech-
 6 nology in intensive community-, land-, and archive-
 7 based programs, as well as hybrid and collaborative
 8 programs in supporting the retention, use, develop-
 9 ment, and teaching of Native American languages by
 10 government and private entities;

11 (12) provide a developmental base from which
 12 interested Tribal colleges and universities and other
 13 Native American entities might develop fully func-
 14 tioning Native American language medium education
 15 systems that include associated preschool, elemen-
 16 tary school, secondary school, and adult education
 17 programs conducted through the medium of Native
 18 American languages;

19 (13) provide a means to further collaboration
 20 among formal government, institutional, and com-
 21 munity-based Native American language programs,
 22 resources, and research efforts with additional access
 23 to international best practices in indigenous lan-
 24 guage revitalization; and

1 (14) develop a support center system for Native
2 American language participants to gather and share
3 helpful information and experiences.

4 **SEC. 3. NATIVE AMERICAN LANGUAGE RESOURCE CENTER.**

5 Section 603 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20
6 U.S.C. 1123) is amended—

7 (1) by redesignating subsections (b) and (c) as
8 subsections (c) and (d), respectively;

9 (2) by inserting after subsection (a) the fol-
10 lowing:

11 “(b) NATIVE AMERICAN LANGUAGE RESOURCE CEN-
12 TER AUTHORIZED.—

13 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary is authorized
14 to make a grant to, or enter into a contract with,
15 an eligible entity for the purpose of—

16 “(A) establishing, strengthening, and oper-
17 ating a Native American language resource and
18 training center as described in paragraph (2);
19 and

20 “(B) staffing the center with individuals
21 who have high-level fluency in American Indian,
22 Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian languages
23 and are experienced with Native American lan-
24 guage education in preschool, elementary

1 school, secondary school, adult education, and
2 higher education programs.

3 “(2) PURPOSES OF CENTER.—The Native
4 American language resource center established under
5 paragraph (1) shall serve as a resource to—

6 “(A) improve the capacity to teach and
7 learn Native American languages and further
8 Native American language acquisition;

9 “(B) preserve, protect, and promote the
10 rights and freedom of Native Americans to use,
11 practice, and develop Native American lan-
12 guages;

13 “(C) allow the United States to fulfill its
14 trust responsibility to Native American commu-
15 nities and address the effects of past discrimi-
16 nation against Native American language
17 speakers;

18 “(D) support revitalization of Native
19 American languages;

20 “(E) encourage and support the use of Na-
21 tive American languages as a medium of in-
22 struction, including use as a medium of edu-
23 cation in schools operated by Tribes, States, the
24 Federal Government, and Native American lan-
25 guage educational organizations;

1 “(F) encourage and support the use and
2 development of Native American languages as
3 the medium of instruction for a wide variety of
4 age levels and academic content areas;

5 “(G) support metrics aligned with the Na-
6 tive American language of instruction, including
7 assessments, qualifications, and processes based
8 on well-demonstrated best practices in Native
9 American language medium education;

10 “(H) identify barriers to Native American
11 language education and learning within Federal
12 laws and actions needed for alignment with the
13 Native American Languages Act (25 U.S.C.
14 2901);

15 “(I) encourage and support elementary
16 schools, secondary schools, and institutions of
17 higher education to include Native American
18 languages in the curriculum in the same man-
19 ner as other world languages, including through
20 cooperative agreements and distance education,
21 and to grant proficiency in Native American
22 languages the same full academic credit as pro-
23 ficiency in other world languages;

24 “(J) encourage and support the develop-
25 ment of appropriate teacher preparation pro-

gramming for the teaching of, and through, Native American languages, including appropriate alternative pathways to teacher certification;

“(K) provide a resource base to provide information to Federal, Tribal, State, and local governments and Native American educational organizations to allow the spread of best practices in the use, practice, and development of Native American languages in Native American communities, including use in educational institutions;

“(L) provide a resource base for the use of technology in intensive community-, land-, and archive-based programs, as well as hybrid and collaborative programs in supporting the retention, use, development, and teaching of Native American languages by government and private entities;

“(M) support the acquisition of distance learning technologies and training for parents, students, teachers, and learning support staff, including the compilation and curation of digital libraries and other online resources in target Native American languages, the development of distance learning curricula appropriate

for preschool, elementary school, secondary school, adult education, and postsecondary education, the pedagogical training for teachers, and other efforts necessary to continue Native American language acquisition through distance learning;

“(N) provide a developmental base from which interested Tribal colleges and universities and other Native American entities might develop fully functioning Native American language medium education systems that include associated preschool, elementary school, secondary school, and adult education programs conducted through the medium of Native American languages;

“(O) provide a means to further collaboration among formal government, institutional, and community-based Native American language programs, resources, and research efforts with additional access to international best practices in indigenous language revitalization;

“(P) develop a support center system for Native American language participants to gather and share helpful information and experiences; and

“(Q) address any of the purposes of foreign language centers included under this section if, in doing so, the Native American language resource center—

“(i) does so as a subsidiary activity;

“(ii) focuses benefits on Native Americans living in Native American communities, or closely tied to such communities; and

“(iii) ensures that one of the outcomes being strengthened through this subparagraph is the use of one or more Native American languages in a Native American community.

“(3) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

“(A) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ‘eligible entity’ means—

“(i) an institution of higher education;

“(ii) an entity within an institution of higher education with dedicated responsibility for Native American language and culture education;

“(iii) a consortium of such institutions; or

1 “(iv) a consortium of such institutions
2 and other entities with unique responsibil-
3 ities for Native American languages.

4 “(B) NATIVE AMERICAN; NATIVE AMER-
5 ICAN LANGUAGE.—The terms ‘Native Amer-
6 ican’ and ‘Native American language’ have the
7 meanings given those terms in section 103 of
8 the Native American Languages Act (25 U.S.C.
9 2902).

10 “(4) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—
11 There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out
12 this subsection, \$3,000,000 for each fiscal year.”;
13 and

14 (3) in the matter preceding paragraph (1) of
15 subsection (c), as redesignated by paragraph (1), by
16 striking “subsection (a)” and inserting “this sec-
17 tion”.

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