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SENATE

REPORT
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A BILL TO AMEND THE NATIVE AMERICAN TOURISM AND IMPROVING VISITOR EXPERIENCE ACT TO AUTHORIZE GRANTS TO INDIAN TRIBES, TRIBAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND NATIVE HAWAIIAN ORGANIZATIONS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

MAY 7, 2025.—Ordered to be printed

Ms. MURKOWSKI, from the Committee on Indian Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany S. 612]

[Including cost estimate of the Congressional Budget Office]

The Committee on Indian Affairs, to which was referred the bill, S. 612, a bill to amend the Native American Tourism and Improving Visitor Experience Act to authorize grants to Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and Native Hawaiian organizations, and for other purposes, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon without amendment and recommends that the bill do pass.

PURPOSE

S. 612 would amend the *Native American Tourism and Improving Visitor Experience Act* (NATIVE Act) to clarify in more detail that federal agencies have the authority to issue grants to Indian Tribes, Tribal organizations, and Native Hawaiian organizations, and to authorize appropriations for those purposes.

BACKGROUND AND NEED

In 2016, Congress enacted the NATIVE Act to provide grants, loans, and technical assistance to Indian Tribes, Tribal organizations, and Native Hawaiian organizations, to assist in developing tourism in Native communities and provide opportunities for visitors to learn about Native American history, cultures, languages, and ways of life.[1]

The NATIVE Act provides funding for grants to meet the purposes of the law, but it does not clearly authorize the Department

[1] Native American Tourism and Improving Visitor Experience Act, Pub. L. No. 114–221, 130 Stat. 847 (2016).

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of Interior's (DOI) Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Office of Native Hawaiian Relations (ONHR) to issue the grants, which led to implementation challenges.[2] S. 612 addresses this issue by amending the NATIVE Act to provide authorization to the BIA and ONHR, along with several other federal agencies, to issue grants to Indian Tribes, Tribal organizations, or Native Hawaiian organizations. S. 612 would also authorize appropriations of $35 million for fiscal years 2025 to 2029 to carry out the grant program.

SUMMARY

S. 612 amends the NATIVE Act to redesignate an existing section and insert a new section to clarify BIA, ONHR, and other named federal agencies have the authority to issue NATIVE Act grants and enter into agreements with Indian Tribes, Tribal organizations, and Native Hawaiian organizations. The bill also authorizes $35 million in appropriations for fiscal years 2025 to 2029 to implement the grant program.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

S. 612 was introduced by Senators Schatz and Murkowski on February 18, 2025.

In the 118th Congress, an identical bill, S. 385, was introduced by Senators Schatz and Murkowski on February 9, 2023. The Committee held a business meeting to consider S. 385 on February 15, 2023 and ordered the bill to be reported without amendment favorably (S. Rept. 118–9).[3] The Senate passed S. 385 without amendment by voice vote on November 21, 2024.[4]

In the 117th Congress, a similar bill, S. 3789, was introduced by Senator Schatz on March 10, 2022. The Committee held a hearing on S. 3789 on March 23, 2022.[5] On May 17, 2022, Senator Murkowski joined as a cosponsor. The Committee, in an open business meeting on May 18, 2022, by a majority voice vote of a quorum present, ordered S. 3789, as amended, favorably reported by voice vote.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The Senate Committee on Indian Affairs in an open business meeting on March 5, 2025, by a majority voice vote of a quorum present, recommends that the Senate pass S. 612.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

Section 1—Native American tourism grant programs

This section amends the NATIVE Act (25 U.S.C. 4351 *et seq.*) to redesignate section 6 (25 U.S.C. 4355) as section 7; and inserts a new section 6 following section 5 (25 U.S.C. 4354). As described in section 6(a) of S. 612, the BIA may make grants to and enter into agreements with Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations. In section

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[2] For example, in FY 2022, the Department of the Interior partnered with the National Park Service to issue NATIVE Act grants to eligible Native Hawaiian organizations because ONHR currently does not have grant issuing authority.

[3] S. Rept. No. 118–9 (2023).

[4] 170 Cong. Rec. S6703 (daily ed. Nov. 21, 2024).

[5] S. Hrg. 117–360: Hearing on S. 1397, S. 3168, S. 3308, S. 3443, S. 3773, and S. 3789 Before the S. Comm. on Indian Affairs, 117th Cong. 5 (2022) (statement of Bryan Newland, Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Dep't of the Interior).

6(b), the ONHR may make grants to and enter into agreements with Native Hawaiian organizations. Section 6(c) clarifies that heads of other federal agencies, including the Secretaries of Commerce, Transportation, Agriculture, Health and Human Services, and Labor, may also make grants to and enter into agreements with Indian Tribes, Tribal organizations, and Native Hawaiian organizations to carry out the purposes of the NATIVE Act. This section authorizes appropriations in the amount of $35 million to implement the grant program for fiscal years 2025 through 2029.

COST AND BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS

S.612, a bill to amend the Native American Tourism and Improving Visitor Experience Act to authorize grants to Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and Native Hawaiian organizations, and for other purposes

As [Manager] **on March 5, 2025**

By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars	2025	2025-2030	2025-2035
Direct Spending (Outlays)	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0
Increase or Decrease (-) in the Deficit	0	0	0
Spending Subject to Appropriation (Outlays)	*	35	35

Increases *net direct spending* in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2036?	No	Statutory pay-as-you-go procedures apply?	No
		Mandate Effects	
Increases *on-budget deficits* in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2036?	No	Contains intergovernmental mandate?	No
		Contains private-sector mandate?	No

* = between zero and $500,000.

S. 612 would authorize the appropriation of $35 million over the 2025–2029 period for a grant program to support Native American tourism. Under the bill, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Office of Native Hawaiian Relations, and other federal agencies would award grants to Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and Native Hawaiian organizations.

The bill does not specify how much would be authorized for any given year. For this estimate, CBO assumes that the bill will be enacted in fiscal year 2025 and that the authorized amount will be provided in 2025. Based on spending patterns for similar programs, CBO estimates that implementing S. 612 would cost $35 million over the 2025–2030 period, assuming appropriation of the authorized amount.

The costs of the legislation, detailed in Table 1, fall within budget function 450 (community and regional development).

TABLE 1.—ESTIMATED INCREASES IN SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION UNDER S. 612

	By fiscal year, millions of dollars						
	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2025–2030
Authorization [a]	35	0	0	0	0	0	35

TABLE 1.—ESTIMATED INCREASES IN SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION UNDER S. 612—Continued

	By fiscal year, millions of dollars						
	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2025–2030
Estimated Outlays	*	15	9	6	3	2	35

* = between zero and $500,000.
[a] The bill would authorize the appropriation of $35 million over the 2025–2029 period but does not specify how much would be authorized for any given year. For this estimate, CBO has assumed the entire authorized amount would be provided in 2025.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Julia Aman. The estimate was reviewed by H. Samuel Papenfuss, Deputy Director of Budget Analysis.

PHILLIP L. SWAGEL,
Director, Congressional Budget Office.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

The testimony provided by the U.S. Department of the Interior from the March 23, 2022 hearing on S. 3789 follows:

INTRODUCTION

Aanii (hello) and good afternoon, Chairman Schatz, Vice Chair Murkowski, and members of the Committee. My name is Bryan Newland, and I serve as the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the U.S. Department of the Interior (Department). Thank you for the opportunity to present the Department's views on . . . S. 3789, a bill to amend the Native American Tourism and Improving Visitor Experience Act to authorize grants to Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and Native Hawaiian organizations, and for other purposes . . .

S. 3789, A BILL TO AMEND THE NATIVE AMERICAN TOURISM AND IMPROVING VISITOR EXPERIENCE ACT TO AUTHORIZE GRANTS TO INDIAN TRIBES, TRIBAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND NATIVE HAWAIIAN ORGANIZATIONS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

S. 3789 would amend the Native American Tourism and Improving Visitors Experience (NATIVE) Act (P.L. 114–221) by creating a new section 6 (redesignating the current section 6 as section 7) that would allow the Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to make grants to Indian Tribes and tribal organizations, and the Director of the Office of Native Hawaiian Relations to make grants to Native Hawaiian organizations. The NATIVE Act, signed into law in 2016, requires the Department of Commerce, the Department of the Interior, and federal agencies with recreational travel or tourism functions to update their management plans to include Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and Native Hawaiian organizations. The Department supports this bill.

CONCLUSION

Chairman Schatz, Vice Chair Murkowski, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide the Department's views on these important bills. I look forward to answering any questions.

REGULATORY AND PAPERWORK IMPACT STATEMENT

Paragraph 11(b) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate requires each report accompanying a bill to evaluate the regulatory and paperwork impact that would be incurred in carrying out the bill. The Committee believes that S. 612, as reported, will have minimal impact on regulatory or paperwork requirements.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

In the opinion of the Committee, it is necessary to dispense with the requirements of subsection 12 of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate to expedite business of the Senate.