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**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

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May 30, 2012

Doc Hastings  
Chairman  
Committee on Natural Resources

Don Young  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Indian and Alaska Native Affairs

Dear Chairman Hastings and Chairman Young:

We write in response to *The New York Times*<sup>1</sup> article reporting on the high levels of rape and attempted rape of Native women in Indian Country, including Alaska Native villages, and to request that the Natural Resources Committee hold oversight hearings on this important issue.

The *Times* reports that the rate of sexual assault of Native women is more than twice the national average. This disparity is even greater in Alaskan rural villages, where according to the Alaska Federation of Natives, Native women are 12 times as likely to be victims of sexual assault. Unfortunately, these ratios most likely reflect the challenges tribal governments across the country face in making arrests and prosecuting crimes of sexual violence due to the widespread geographic isolation of their lands and the lack of reliable communications infrastructure in Indian Country generally. Solutions to these identifiable problems that exacerbate already high violent crime rates in Indian Country can and should be addressed in Congress.

What is more, convicted sexual offenders are apparently abundant on tribal lands. The *Times* reports that the Rosebud Sioux Reservation in South Dakota, with about 25,000 people, is home to 99 “class 3” sex offenders – those deemed most likely to commit sex crimes after their release from prison. The Tohono O’odham Nation’s reservation in Arizona, where about 15,000 people live, has 184 class 3 offenders, according to the Justice Department. By comparison, Boston, with a population of 618,000, has 252 class 3 offenders and Minneapolis, with a population of 383,000, has 101, according to the local police. While there is no “acceptable” number of sex offenders living in any one community, that tribal lands have so many with such low populations relative to urban areas only underscores the need for congressional action.

<sup>1</sup> Article available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/23/us/native-americans-struggle-with-high-rate-of-rape.html?smid=pl-share>

We are extremely concerned that accountability for violent crimes in Indian Country may be decreasing as Native women continue to be victims of sexual assault at alarming rates. We cannot stand idle in the face of this distressing news and call on your leadership to bring this issue to the national spotlight by convening oversight hearings in the near term. Solutions to sexual assault of Native women in Alaska and across the nation's tribal lands may not be quick or convenient, but we strongly believe that responsible measures to address this crisis deserve to be explored by our Committee. We look forward to working with you and Indian Country on finding workable solutions to this serious problem.

Please contact Jennifer Romero of the House Natural Resources Committee Democratic staff at 202-225-6065 with any questions.

Sincerely yours,



Edward J. Markey  
Ranking Member  
Natural Resources Committee

Dan Boren  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Indian and Alaska Native Affairs