



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

November 6, 2015

The Honorable John Barrasso, *Chairman*
U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
828 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jon Tester, *Vice-Chairman*
U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
828 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

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NCAI HEADQUARTERS
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Re: NCAI Support for S. 209 – The Indian Tribal Energy Development and Self-Determination Amendments Act of 2015

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Vice-Chairman Tester:

On behalf of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the oldest, largest, and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization serving the broad interests of tribal governments and communities, I'm writing to express our continued support for S. 209 – the Indian Tribal Energy Development and Self-Determination Amendments Act of 2015. We urge swift action to pass S. 209 in the Senate and enact it into law.

Tribal energy resources are vast, largely untapped, and critical to America's efforts to achieve energy security and independence, reduce greenhouse gases, and promote economic development. Energy development is integral to tribal efforts to generate jobs and to improve tribal members' standard of living. However, developing these resources on tribal lands, not unlike other trust resources, continues to be a challenge as tribes face barriers to energy development which do not exist outside of Indian lands. S. 209 is an important piece of legislation that would remove many regulatory hurdles tribes face when developing their energy resources.

S. 209 contains provisions that will: create additional consultation requirements for the Department of the Interior; improve the Tribal Energy Resource Agreements process in the Energy Policy Act of 2005 by recognizing tribal self-determination over energy resources; establish a process for creating and approving Tribal Energy Development Organizations; expand direct access to the Department of Energy's Weatherization Program; support American Indian and Alaska Native biomass demonstration projects; and amend the appraisal and right-of-way approval processes.

Overall, S. 209 provides tribes with greater control and flexibility to develop their traditional and renewable energy resources, helping to create careers and capital in Indian Country. We strongly urge the Senate to quickly pass this longstanding Indian Country legislative priority and enact it into law.

If you have any questions, please contact Colby Duren, NCAI Staff Attorney & Legislative Counsel, at cduren@ncai.org or (202) 466-7767.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Pata
Executive Director