

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 8, 2024

The Honorable Merrick Garland
U.S. Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland:

We write to express our concerns regarding the status of the Department of Justice's (DOJ) implementation of Savanna's Act. Violent crime continues to disproportionately harm Native Americans and Alaska Natives across the nation. While we appreciate DOJ's ongoing efforts to address the increased rates of victimization amongst these communities, DOJ has fallen short in its implementation of Savanna's Act.

As you know, the complex jurisdictional overlap in Indian country between various law enforcement authorities requires streamlined collaboration and procedures. Named in memory of Savanna LaFontaine-Greywind, Savanna's Act standardizes law enforcement protocols in order to coordinate responses and data collection related to missing and murdered Indigenous peoples cases across agencies. Without implementation of this law, countless cases of violence against Native men, women, and children are not being effectively responded to by the systems and people that should be protecting them.

In November 2023, the Not Invisible Act Commission, comprised of law enforcement personnel, survivors, Tribal leaders, and multi-agency federal partners, released a final report on their findings and recommendations to combat the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous people.¹ The Commission's final report, *Not One More*, highlighted mandates and requirements of Savanna's Act that DOJ has failed to implement thus far. The Commission's findings indicate that there remains a lack of clarity over processes and jurisdictional procedures among first responder agencies at all levels to respond to crime and violence amongst native communities.

Savanna's Act was signed into law in October 2020. Despite the time frames allotted for DOJ to implement Savanna's Act, it is unclear how far along DOJ's implementation status is for multiple portions of the law. DOJ's website section dedicated to the implementation status of the Act and training opportunities does not appear to be regularly updated. While Savanna's Act will not solve all public safety issues facing Native Americans and Alaska Natives, it is an essential step that will begin to respond to this extreme gap of justice. We respectfully request DOJ's answers to the following questions be provided to our offices by Friday, May 24, 2024:

¹ https://www.justice.gov/d9/2023-11/34%20NIAC%20Final%20Report_version%2011.1.23_FINAL.pdf

1. The most recent training to law enforcement agencies regarding recording Tribal enrollment information of a victim in Federal databases, as required under Section 4(a), was listed on DOJ's website to occur on August 16-18, 2022.² What other training opportunities are being made available to law enforcement agencies to record Tribal enrollment for victims in Federal databases, outside of DOJ's Tribal Access Program?
 - a. How will DOJ publicize and encourage participation for these training opportunities?
2. In accordance with Section 5, what is the status of implementation for U.S. Attorneys to develop guidelines related to responding to cases of missing or murdered Native Americans and Alaska Natives?
 - a. DOJ has stated that all U.S. Attorneys' Offices in federal judicial districts with tribal lands have established guidelines as required by Section 5(a) that have been in place since the spring of 2022. As required by Section 5(b), how many of the 93 U.S. Attorneys have implemented guidelines mandated by Section 5(a)? Please provide a status update for each of the 93 U.S. Attorneys' Offices.
 - b. DOJ has also stated that their MMIP Regional Outreach Program staff may collaborate with U.S. Attorney Offices to update and refine Savanna's Act guidelines. How else is DOJ ensuring that Offices of the U.S. Attorneys are complying with their obligations under Savanna's Act?
 - c. In each of the 93 U.S. Attorneys' Offices, how many Assistant U.S. Attorneys are assigned to prosecuting MMIP related cases? Please provide a response for each of the 93 U.S. Attorneys' Offices.
 - d. Section 5(d)(1) mandates that the name of each law enforcement agency that has developed guidelines to respond to missing and murdered Native Americans and Alaska Natives be published on DOJ's website. What process is DOJ using to guarantee that information is published in a timely and accurate manner?
 - e. Under Section 5(e), how are required trainings on implementing guidelines to address missing and murdered Native Americans and Alaska Natives being promoted to law enforcement agencies?
3. In order to annually fulfill the annual reporting requirements on missing and murdered Native Americans and Alaska Natives required in Section 6(a), when will DOJ release their next Indian Country Investigations and Prosecutions report to Congress?
 - a. The last published report was released in 2023 and included information from Calendar Year (CY) 2021. Why are there delays in compiling the information in the report?
4. Under Section 7, how is DOJ ensuring access to the grants and open solicitations offered to Tribal Governments to address crime in their communities and fulfill their obligations under Savanna's Act?
5. What other steps is DOJ taking to ensure implementation of Savanna's Act will be completed as soon as possible?

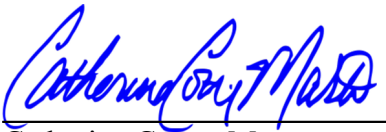
We cannot begin to reduce violence for Native Americans and Alaska Natives if we do not bring together inter-jurisdictional resources and streamline responses to crime. In order for law enforcement, Tribal members, and other stakeholders to best protect the public safety of Native

² <https://www.justice.gov/tribal/mmip/SavannasAct>

Americans and Alaska Natives, DOJ must fulfill its obligation to fully administer Savanna's Act.

We encourage DOJ to expedite their efforts to finalize implementation of Savanna's Act and take into consideration the Commission's additional recommendations. It is long overdue that the federal government take action to protect Native victims and their families. Thank you for your attention to this important issue and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator