



AIANTA

American Indian Alaska Native
Tourism Association

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Bipartisan Bill to Empower Native Communities & Expand Cultural Tourism Opportunities Introduced in Senate Today

National Tourism Industry Applauds the Introduction of the NATIVE Act of 2015

Washington D.C. (June 16, 2015) - Today, the U.S. Travel Association (USTA) and the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA) praised the Senate leadership for the introduction of the Native American Tourism and Improving Visitor Experience (NATIVE) Act of 2015. The bipartisan legislation was introduced today by U.S. Senators Brian Schatz (D-Hawai'i), co-chair of the Senate Tourism Caucus, and John Thune (R-S.D.), chairman of the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee. U.S. Senators Jon Tester (D-Mont.), Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), Tom Udall (D-N.M.), Dean Heller (R-Nev.), Al Franken (D-Minn.), and Mike Rounds (R-S.D.) are original cosponsors of the NATIVE Act.

"AIANTA strongly supports the goals of the NATIVE Act and we look forward to Congressional hearings and working with members of the House of Representatives to advance this important policy initiative," AIANTA Board President Sherry L. Rupert said today in a statement. "Tourism can help many tribes and Native communities become more self-sufficient, create jobs and businesses, and protect tribal heritage assets while sharing tribal culture with domestic and global audiences. The potential of Native tourism remains a largely untapped national tourism resource and holds great potential for increasing domestic travelers as well as international visitors."

Rupert also serves as the Executive Director of the State of Nevada Indian Commission, and sits on the prestigious U.S. Department of Commerce Travel and Tourism Advisory Board (US TTAB).

"The NATIVE Act will help highlight the diverse options that are available to travelers to and within the U.S., which can only help spur travel activity and the powerful economic benefits that come with it," said U.S. Travel Association President and CEO Roger Dow. "People already think of traveling the U.S. for shopping, theme parks and natural wonders like our coastlines and mountain ranges, but this will boost understanding of our incredibly rich native history as well. This will be of particular benefit to international travelers, who spend \$4,300 per trip to the U.S. on average and are a big part of why travel is one of the most effective job creators of any sector of the economy."



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For the official news release from Senator Schatz and Senator Thune, visit

http://aianta.org/uploads/PressRelease/4e0cad1365a945c0b56a1f4a9de551e5/NATIVE_Act_Senator_Schatz_News_Release.pdf.

The NATIVE Act received a unanimous endorsement from AIANTA's entire Board of Directors, representing six regions across the U.S.

"The NATIVE Act will help to advance tourism's potential to improve the lives of remote and well-known tribes in Alaska, while also supporting all of the work that AIANTA does to expand Indian Country tourism," said Rachel Moreno, AIANTA Board of Directors Vice President and Alaska Regional Representative, Sitka Tribe of Alaska.

"We are thrilled with Senator Schatz' introduction of this bill," said Rowena Akana, AIANTA Board of Directors Pacific Regional Representative, Native Hawaiian. "The NATIVE Act will offer new tourism opportunities for Native Hawaiians, previously unavailable," added Akana.

Other AIANTA Board members in support of the NATIVE Act include Mario Fulmer, Alaska Regional Representative, Huna Totem Corporation; Rowena Yeahquo, Pacific Regional Representative, Kiowa/Comanche; Jackie Yellowtail, Plains Regional Representative, Crow Tribal member; William D. Lowe, Plains Regional Representative, Muscogee Creek Nation; Ernie Stevens III, Midwest Regional Representative, Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin; Aimee Awonohopay, Midwest Regional Representative, St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin and Lora Ann Chaisson, Eastern Regional Representative, United Houma Nation.

About AIANTA

The American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA) is a 501(c)(3) national nonprofit association of Native American tribes and tribal businesses that was incorporated in 2002 to advance Indian Country tourism. The association is made up of member tribes from six regions: Alaska, Eastern, Midwest, Pacific, Plains and the Southwest. AIANTA's mission is to define, introduce, grow and sustain American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian tourism that honors traditions and values.

The purpose of AIANTA is to provide our constituents with the voice and tools needed to advance tourism while helping tribes, tribal organizations and tribal members create infrastructure and capacity through technical assistance, training and educational resources.

AIANTA serves as the liaison between Indian Country, governmental and private entities for the development, growth, and sustenance of Indian Country tourism. By developing and implementing programs and providing economic development opportunities, AIANTA helps tribes build for their future while sustaining and strengthening their cultural legacy.

To learn more, please visit www.aianta.org. For current updates, like us on [Facebook](#) and follow us on Twitter ([@OfficialAIANTA](#)).

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