

**For Immediate Release**

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**SENATORS SCHATZ, THUNE, COLLEAGUES INTRODUCE  
BIPARTISAN LEGISLATION TO IMPROVE AND GROW  
TOURISM IN NATIVE COMMUNITIES**

*NATIVE Act Would Empower Native Communities & Expand Cultural  
Tourism Opportunities*

Washington, D.C. – 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, today introduced the Native American Tourism and Improving Visitor Experience (NATIVE) Act, bipartisan legislation that would enhance and integrate native tourism, empower native communities, and expand unique cultural tourism opportunities in the United States. 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.

**“When we grow our tourism industry in Hawai‘i and across the country, we create jobs and support thousands of small businesses,”** said Senator Schatz. **“Every state, every community is different. That is why our legislation aims to empower native communities and give them the resources to share their history and culture with travelers from around the globe.”**

**“This legislation empowers our Native American tribes and tribal organizations to have inclusion in federal tourism initiatives,”** said Senator Thune. **“The unique and rich culture of the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota nations are embedded within the state of South Dakota. It is my hope that this common-sense bill will help integrate tribally driven tourism plans nationally, and ultimately help grow local economies.”**

The NATIVE Act would require federal agencies with tourism assets and responsibilities to include tribes and native organizations in national tourism efforts and strategic planning. It would also provide Native Hawaiian, Alaska Native and American Indian communities with access to resources and technical assistance needed to build sustainable recreational and cultural travel and tourism infrastructure and capacity; spur economic development, and create good jobs.

**“In Montana and all throughout the nation, Indian Country offers travelers a rich cultural**

**experience,” said Senator Tester. “This bill will ensure tribes have a seat at the table as the Administration drafts a strategy for increasing tourism, creating jobs, spurring economic growth, and supporting tribal sovereignty.”**

**“Alaska Natives comprise over half of the number of tribes recognized nationwide; their great pride and wisdom can be deeply instructive to 21st century visitors,” said Senator Murkowski. “They know best what their cultural contributions are to the world, and how best to be portrayed to the general public – and they deserve the employment opportunities that come with Alaska’s ever-growing tourism industry.”**

**“New Mexico’s native communities are rich with culture, history and breathtaking landscape,” said Senator Udall. “This bipartisan legislation will expand tourism opportunities for tribal communities — creating good jobs and opening up educational opportunities for travelers in New Mexico and across the country.”**

**“Tourism plays a tremendous role in Nevada’s economy, and I will continue supporting it. Unfortunately, the needed infrastructure simply does not exist to promote many tribal communities’ efforts,” said Senator Heller. “This legislation provides tribal communities in the Silver State with avenues to promote our state’s rich culture, heritage, and history. I’d like to thank Senators Thune and Schatz for their hard work on this bipartisan legislation.”**

**“Minnesota’s tribes offer unique cultures, great food, and amazing experiences,” said Senator Franken. “This bill will make sure that tribes are part of federal tourism activities. Including Native Americans in these efforts will help promote everything Indian Country has to offer, supporting jobs and economic opportunities.”**

**“The history of Native Americans is deeply woven into the fabric of America, particularly in South Dakota,” said Senator Rounds. “The NATIVE Act of 2015 seeks to expand cooperation between federal and Native American efforts to promote and preserve the rich history and culture of Native Americans in the United States.”**

The NATIVE Act is supported by a broad coalition of stakeholders including the U.S. Travel Association, American Indian and Alaska Native Tourism Association, Southeast Tourism Society, Western States Tourism Policy Council, National Congress of American Indians, Alaska Federation of Natives, Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement, Native American Contractors Association, and the Native Enterprise Initiative of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

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