

The Native American Indian Education Act

H.R. 1089 & S. 1390 (114th Congress)

To provide relief to State education budgets during a recovering economy, to help fulfill the Federal mandate to provide higher education opportunities for Native American Indians, and for other purposes.

Sponsored by Senator Cory Gardner (R-CO) with Senate Co-Sponsors: Michael Bennet (D-CO), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Martin Heinrich (D-NM). (A hearing has been held on the senate bill in the HELP Committee, during the 112th Congress.)

Sponsored by Representative Scott Tipton (R-CO) with House Co-Sponsors: Mark Amodei (R-NV), Tony Cardenas (D-CA), Yvette Clarke (D-NY), Mike Coffman (R-CO), Tom Cole (R-OK), John Conyers (D-MI), Diana DeGette (D-CO), Keith Ellison (D-MN), John Garamendi (D-CA), Alan Grayson (D-FL), Raul Grijalva (D-AZ), Richard Hanna (R-NY), Alcee Hastings (D-FL), Ruben Hinojosa (D-TX), Michael Honda (D-CA), Walter Jones (R-NC), Derek Kilmer (D-WA), Peter King (R-NY), Ann Kirkpatrick (D-AZ), Doug Lamborn (R-CO), John Larson (D-CT), Brenda Lawrence (D-MI), Michelle Lujan-Grisham (D-NM), Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM), Betty McCollum (D-MN), Gwen Moore (D-WI), Markwayne Mullin (R-OK), Richard Nolan (D-MN), Mark Pocan (D-WI), Ed Perlmutter (D-CO), Collin Peterson (D-MN), Jared Polis (D-CO), Charles Rangel (D-NY), Raul Ruiz (D-CA), Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ), Mark Takai (D-HI), Mark Takano (D-CA), Juan Vargas (D-CA), Tim Walz (D-MN), Don Young (R-AK).

Organizations that have endorsed the legislation: The National Congress of American Indians, The National Indian Gaming Association, The Native American Rights Fund, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Mescalero Apache Tribe, Southern Ute Indian Tribe, Cherokee Nation, Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs, CO Governor’s Office, CO Lieutenant Governor’s Office, Colorado General Assembly, Colorado Commission on Higher Education, Associated Students of Fort Lewis College, Former Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, and the University of Minnesota, Morris.

Background: The bills relate to the Native American Tuition Waiver Programs at Fort Lewis College (FLC) and the University of Minnesota at Morris (UMM) that have existed for over 100 years. In the case of Fort Lewis College, effective in 1910, the federal government by legislative contract with the state of Colorado deeded a decommissioned military fort that was being used as an Indian boarding school and over 6000 surrounding acres, to the state, in exchange for a commitment to provide **tuition free** education to American Indian/Alaska Native students, on par with their white counterparts, **in perpetuity**. At the time of agreement, there were approximately a half dozen Native students being educated at the site. The Colorado land in question has a present day value of \$20 million; however, the cost of the Native American Tuition Waiver program has grown to over \$16 million PER YEAR to the state of Colorado. In the past 12 years, Colorado has paid out nearly \$120 million for what has become a very fast growing program that is national in scope.

Today, 1,123 American Indian/Alaska Native students from over 162 tribes attend Fort Lewis College; approximately 30%

of enrollment. Fort Lewis College **awards more degrees to Native American students** than any baccalaureate institution in the United States. In addition, FLC is the **number one baccalaureate institution in the nation in awarding STEM degrees** to Native American students. In the last dozen years, 54% of all congressional districts (234) have a Native American student in the Tuition Waiver Program at Fort Lewis College. In addition, over half (54%/306) of all federally recognized tribes have been represented among the student body at FLC since 2000.

A nearly identical agreement, effective in 1909, was made between the federal government and the state of Minnesota related to an Indian boarding school in Morris, for land in exchange for an agreement to maintain an educational institution to educate Native students free of tuition and on terms of equality with white students. Today, 317 American Indian/Alaskan Native students (17% of enrollment)¹ attend the UMM from 50 federally recognized tribes. UMM has waived over \$25 million in tuition since the college was established in 1960. Annual waiver costs grew to \$3.5 million in 2015. The University of Minnesota and state of Minnesota have absorbed \$14 million in unrealized tuition revenue since 2010.

American Indian/Alaska Native education is woefully underfunded at every level, as evident from baccalaureate degree attainment rates that have remained flat at 0.7% for decades. The tuition waiver programs at these two historic institutions have proven to be effective at educating Indian people to the benefit of the Nation, as a whole. FLC and UMM through mandates to their respective states, have taken on a federal trust responsibility to American Indian people, and delivered a wonderful product. Today, they need some help to effectively continue this mission.

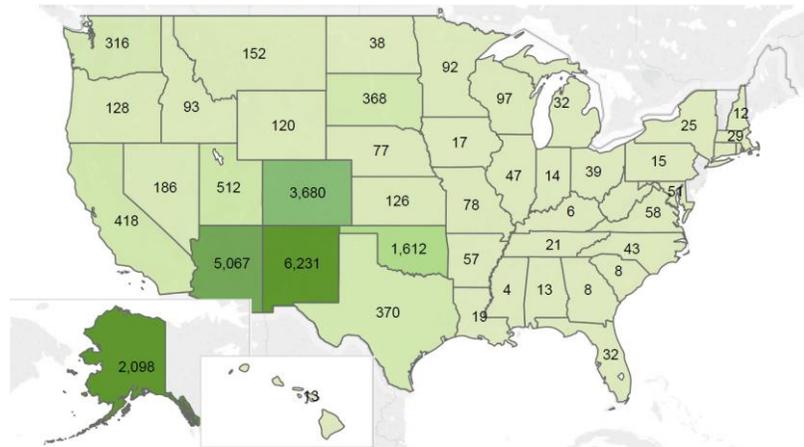


Figure 1: From fall 2000-14, FLC has given 22,442 Tuition Waivers to American Indian/Alaskan Native students from 47 states.

¹ **Note:** UMM’s fall 2014 enrollment of 317 degree seeking undergraduates include 123 students who identified their race/ethnicity as AI/AN only (reported in IPEDS as ‘American Indian’), plus 194 students who identified their

race and ethnicity as AI/AN, as well as one or more other races ‘two or more races’ per IPEDS.



Native American Indian Education Act, 114th Congress, First Session



For more information, please contact, Angie Rochat, Director of Federal Relations and Sponsored Research, Fort Lewis College (970) 247-7695 or rochat_a@fortlewis.edu; or David Devendorf, Vice President Ben Nighthorse Consultants (719) 250-0541 or nighthorseconsultants@gmail.com.