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State-Tribal Relations Committee

65th Montana Legislature

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May 10, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate Majority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
838 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Chairman Hoeven,

I write on behalf of the Montana Legislature's State-Tribal Relations Committee to express our support of S. 1870, the SURVIVE Act, and S. 1942, Savanna's Act.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, American Indians experience violence at a rate that is more than twice the national average. As our committee studies the subjects of human trafficking, missing persons, and violence against women in Indian Country, we support S. 1870, sponsored by Chairman Hoeven, and its dedication of 5% of the Crime Victims Fund (CVF) for the next 10 years to support tribal victim assistance programs.

Although the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018, recently set aside 3% of the CVF for tribal programs -- a success for which we congratulate you -- we urge the full Senate to take up and pass S. 1870. This proposal sets aside more funding and provides important guidance for its distribution and use. The Committee on Indian Affairs reported S.1870 out favorably on December 6. The proposal is worthy of further consideration.

We also support S. 1942, sponsored by Sen. Heidi Heitkamp, which awaits action by the Committee on Indian Affairs. S. 1942 provides critical directives to the U.S. Attorney General, including:

- to increase collection of data related to missing and murdered Indian women, to improve the sharing of that data across all jurisdictions, and to improve tribal access to federal databases;
- to review existing law enforcement and justice protocols for missing and murdered Indians and to develop standardized, written protocols for the investigation of cases and the responsibilities of each federal partner;

- to improve inter-jurisdictional cooperation and law enforcement response rates and case follow-up; and
- to ensure that Indians and their families have access to victim services.

The directives of S. 1942 are far reaching and the outcomes sorely needed; the proposal deserves consideration by the full Senate. We urge the Committee on Indian Affairs to give S. 1942 a favorable report as quickly as possible.

Majority Leader McConnell and Chairman Hoeven, we thank you for your efforts to move these bills forward. Please let me know if I or this committee can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Representative Sharon Stewart-Peregoy, Chair
Montana State-Tribal Relations Committee

cc: U.S. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer
Senator Jon Tester
Senator Steve Daines
Senator Heidi Heitkamp
U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions
U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke
Montana Attorney General Tim Fox