

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 7, 2017

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Chairman
House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Bishop,

We respectfully request that the full House Natural Resources Committee hold a hearing on the impacts to tribal communities of repealing the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA). As members of the Committee on Natural Resources, it is our duty to carefully deliberate – in an open and transparent forum – any legislation that could damage the health of native communities.

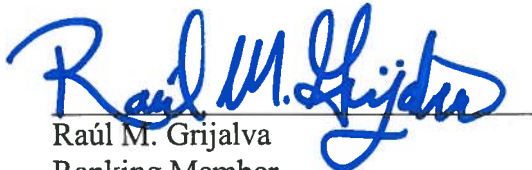
It is shameful that House majority leaders are hiding their plans to repeal the ACA from the American people and their representatives in Congress. In 2009, a draft of the ACA was released six months prior to its passage. Congress held over 90 hearings, heard testimony from over 181 witnesses, and considered hundreds of amendments during committee markups. Rather than invite robust public deliberation, as was the case in 2009, the current House majority is treating legislation to repeal the ACA like a classified document, allowing only certain members of Congress the opportunity for review behind closed doors. Surely when the future health and well-being of the American people is at stake, Congress can take the time to be transparent.

As you may recall, during consideration of the ACA, the House Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on June 25th, 2009, on H.R. 2708, the Indian Health Care Improvement Act Amendments of 2009. This hearing allowed for public testimony and discussion of the health needs of Native American and Alaska Native communities, which was essential to the permanent reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act as a provision of the comprehensive Affordable Care Act. The federal government has a fundamental obligation to ensure the health and well-being of tribes. To meet this obligation, it is critical that you hold a hearing prior to any committee consideration of legislation that would repeal the ACA.

Tribal communities have long faced barriers to accessing adequate health care. The ACA made critical improvements and investments in native health care, including expanding programs for mental health, substance abuse, and preventative services. Nearly 250,000 more American Indians and Alaska Natives have health insurance in 2015 than 2010. The law also authorized hospice, assisted living, long-term, and home- and community-based care for tribes. There are also new authorities for facilitation of care for Indian veterans, whose community providers are now able to receive reimbursement from the VA for their care. Provisions such as the IHCA that improve public health for our constituents should not be scrapped behind closed doors without any input from experts, and without impacted communities receiving fair opportunity to comment.

The Committee on Natural Resources has an obligation to ensure that Native American and Alaska Native communities are protected and that the United States meets its treaty obligations. The repeal of the ACA will only widen health disparities for tribal communities. This Committee should fully understand and hear expert testimony of the impacts such action will have on tribes.

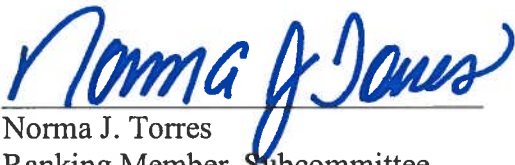
Sincerely,



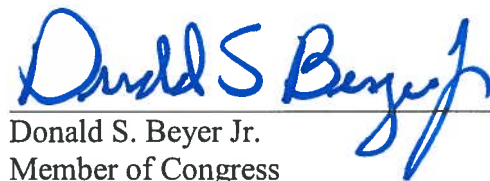
Raúl M. Grijalva
Ranking Member
Natural Resources Committee



Jared Huffman
Vice-Ranking Member
Natural Resources Committee



Norma J. Torres
Ranking Member, Subcommittee
Indian, Insular, and Alaska Native Affairs



Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress




Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress



Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress



Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress



Niki Tsongas
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Colleen Hanabusa
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Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress