



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TRIBAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICERS
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NEWS RELEASE:

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**NATHPO Testifies on NAGPRA to the
U.S. House of Representatives Full Committee on Natural Resources**

(Washington, DC) – On October 7, 2009, the National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (NATHPO) testified before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources, which held a full committee oversight hearing on the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). Other witnesses included representatives from the National Park Service-Interior Department, San Carlos Apache Tribe, Caddo Nation of Oklahoma, Society for American Archaeology, and a former member of the National NAGPR Review Committee.

Committee Chairman Nick J. Rahall (D-WV), stated in his opening remarks that the hearing was “to hear about the Administration’s goals” for NAGPRA, and “to explore possible improvements to the implementation of the program.” In addition he stated that, “The Act directed museums and Federal agencies to compile an inventory of their culturally affiliated human remains and funerary objects and submit that inventory to the National NAGPRA program by November 1, 1995 for publication in the Federal Register. Almost 15 years later, the Administration is still publishing these inventories.”

Chr. Rahall’s opening remarks and written testimony prepared by each witness may be found on the House Committee on Natural Resources website. NATHPO testimony and a weblink to the hearing are on the NATHPO website.

NATHPO chairman Reno Franklin stated, “We appreciate Chairman Rahall’s attention to this very important federal law. Many of us in California have been working to ensure that museums and Federal agencies comply with the law and this hearing brings to light many issues that we have been struggling with for years.”

A few highlights from the hearing include:

Brenda Shemayne Edwards, Chairwoman of the Caddo Nation of Oklahoma: “The reality is if we were to receive a NAGPRA grant each and every year, it would be at least 130 years before all of our human remains, associated funerary objects, unassociated funerary objects, sacred objects and objects of cultural patrimony could be repatriated.”

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NATHPO is a not-for-profit membership association of tribal governments that are committed to preserving, rejuvenating, and improving the status of tribal cultures and cultural practices by supporting Native languages, arts, dances, music, oral traditions, cultural properties, tribal museums, tribal cultural centers, and tribal libraries.

Ms. D. Bambi Kraus, NATHPO president: “Today’s hearing is about America’s living history – a uniquely American history – and how as Americans, we treat our dead and how we treat the sacred cultural objects that play an important role in the living cultures of today.”

Steve Titla, General Counsel, San Carlos Apache Tribe: “Traditional, responsible Apaches would never, now and in the past, willingly give up these items to a non-Apache for non-ritual use. Most of these objects were acquired, sometimes stolen, from Apache lands by museums at a time of extraordinary hardship, misery, and injustice for Apache people. Some agents of museums took deliberate advantage of these conditions to get these items, at the expense of Apaches.”

The entire hearing may be viewed on the House Committee on Natural Resources website. NATHPO has posted the link on our website (www.nathpo.org) or you may get to the video weblink via one of two ways:

1. Go to the Committee's website <http://resourcescommittee.house.gov/> and click on the "Hearings and Markups" link and scroll to October 7, 2009, hearing; or
2. Go to this direct link: http://resourcescommittee.house.gov/index.php?option=com_jcalpro&Itemid=27&extmode=view&extid=296 [- continues on next line -]

Written testimony may be submitted to the Committee by close of business, Wednesday, October 21, 2009, as follows:

Attn: Teresa Bravo, Clerk, Office of Indian Affairs, Committee on Natural Resources, U.S. House of Representatives, 140 Cannon HOB, Washington, DC 20515, Teresa.Bravo@mail.house.gov, Tel (202) 226-9725, Fax (202) 225-7094, <http://resourcescommittee.house.gov>

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