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More than one hundred and twenty days have passed....the results proffered by the Museum of the American Indian were found unsatisfactory by the presidential team.....

Letter to the Smithsonian: Internal Review of Smithsonian Exhibitions and Materials
The White House August 12, 2025

The Honorable Lonnie G. Bunch III, Secretary, Smithsonian Institution
1000 Jefferson Dr SW, Washington, DC 20560

Subject: Internal Review of Smithsonian Exhibitions and Materials

Dear Secretary Bunch,

We wish to begin by expressing our appreciation for the brief tour you gave us recently of the National Museum of American History and the National Museum of African American History and Culture, and by acknowledging your work on behalf of the Smithsonian Institution, as well as the Institution's role in shaping public understanding of American history and culture. We are completely aligned with your statement that the Smithsonian is "a welcoming place of knowledge and discovery for all Americans." We are grateful that you and the Board of Regents have expressed your commitment to the non-partisan, educational mission of this great institution.

As we prepare to celebrate the 250th anniversary of our Nation's founding, it is more important than ever that our national museums reflect the unity, progress, and enduring values that define the American story. In this spirit, and in accordance with Executive Order 14253, *Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History*, we will be leading a comprehensive internal review of selected Smithsonian museums and exhibitions. This initiative aims to ensure alignment with the President's directive to celebrate American exceptionalism, remove divisive or partisan narratives, and restore confidence in our shared cultural institutions.

This review is a constructive and collaborative effort — one rooted in respect for the Smithsonian's vital mission and its extraordinary contributions. Our goal is not to interfere with the day-to-day operations of curators or staff, but rather to support a broader vision of excellence that highlights historically accurate, uplifting, and inclusive portrayals of America's heritage.

The review will focus on several key areas:

- 1. Public-facing Content:** A review of exhibition text, wall didactics, websites, educational materials, and digital and social media content to assess tone, historical framing, and alignment with American ideals.
- 2. Curatorial Process:** A series of interviews with curators and senior staff to better understand the selection process, exhibition approval workflows, and any frameworks currently guiding exhibition content.

3. **Exhibition Planning:** A review of current and future exhibitions, with particular attention to those planned for the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.
4. **Collection Use:** Evaluation of how existing materials and collections are being used or could be used to highlight American achievement and progress, including whether the Smithsonian can make better use of certain materials by digitizing or conveying to other institutions.
5. **Narrative Standards:** The development of consistent curatorial guidelines that reflect the Smithsonian's original mission.

Initially, our review will focus on the following museums. Additional museums will be reviewed in Phase II.

- National Museum of American History
- National Museum of Natural History
- National Museum of African American History and Culture
- National Museum of the American Indian
- National Air and Space Museum
- Smithsonian American Art Museum
- National Portrait Gallery
- Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

Materials Request

To initiate this process, we respectfully request that each of the museums listed above designate a primary point of contact and provide the following materials to our team (including for online content):

1. **250th Anniversary Programming**
 1. Exhibition plans, draft concepts, and event outlines related to America 250.
 2. Supporting materials such as proposed artwork, descriptive placards, exhibition catalogs, event themes, and lists of invited speakers and events.
2. **Current Exhibition Content**
 1. Catalog and programs for all current and ongoing exhibitions, including budgets.
 2. Digital files of all wall didactics, placards, and gallery labels currently on display.
3. **Traveling and Upcoming Exhibitions**
 1. Full index of scheduled traveling exhibitions (2026-2029).
 2. Proposals, projected schedules, and preliminary budgets for upcoming exhibitions over the next three years.
4. **Internal Guidelines and Governance**
 1. Curatorial and staff manuals, job descriptions, and organizational charts.
 2. Documentation outlining the chain of command for exhibition approvals, scheduling, and content review.
 3. Internal communications or memos pertaining to exhibition or artwork selection and approval processes.
5. **Index of the Permanent Collection**
 1. Access to an inventory of all permanent holdings.

6. **Educational Materials**
 1. Teacher guides, student resources, and supplementary educational content linked to current exhibitions.
7. **Digital Presence**
 1. URLs and descriptions of official museum websites and exhibition-related microsites.
8. **External Partnerships**
 1. A list of active partnerships with outside contributors including artists, historians, nonprofits, and advocacy organizations.
9. **Grant-Related Documentation**
 1. Copies of grant applications and funding agreements tied to past or current exhibitions, particularly those that influence content or presentation.
 2. Current artists featured in museum's galleries that received a Smithsonian grant.
10. **Surveys and other evaluations of visitor experience**
 1. Responses to surveys and other forms of evaluating the experience of visitors to the Smithsonian's museums and users of digital content.

Timeline

To ensure clarity and coordination across all parties involved, we have developed the following implementation timeline:

Within 30 days of receipt of this letter, we anticipate:

- Each museum to submit all requested materials outlined in the first four bullet points above, including current exhibition descriptions, draft plans for upcoming shows, America 250 programming materials, and internal guidelines used in exhibition development.
- Review of America 250 exhibition and program planning and connect with curators and staff about their specific proposals.
- A staff liaison from each museum will be designated to serve as the primary point of contact throughout the review process.
- Our team will begin on-site observational visits, conducting walkthroughs of current exhibitions to document themes, visitor experience, and visual messaging.

Within 75 days:

- Museums are asked to submit the remaining requested documentation (items 5 through 10), including promotional literature, grant data, educational materials, and guided tour content.
- Our team will begin scheduling and conducting voluntary interviews with curators and senior staff. These conversations will help us better understand each museum's goals and the broader curatorial vision guiding the institution.
- Each museum should finalize and submit its updated plan to commemorate America's 250th anniversary and ensure coordination with the White House Salute to America 250 Task Force to align messaging and public engagement.

Within 120 days:

- **Museums should begin implementing content corrections where necessary, replacing divisive or ideologically driven language with unifying, historically accurate, and constructive descriptions across placards, wall didactics, digital displays, and other public-facing materials.**

If all benchmarks are met on schedule, we anticipate completing our review and preparing a final report for your review in early 2026. This report will include museum-specific assessments, institutional trends, and constructive recommendations for future exhibition strategy.

We view this process as a collaborative and forward-looking opportunity—one that empowers museum staff to embrace a revitalized curatorial vision rooted in the strength, breadth, and achievements of the American story. By focusing on **Americanism**—the people, principles, and progress that define our nation—we can work together to renew the Smithsonian’s role as the world’s leading museum institution.

We look forward to working alongside you and your team to ensure these iconic institutions remain vibrant, trusted, and inspiring for generations to come.

Lindsey Halligan, *Special Assistant to the President and Senior Associate Staff Secretary*
Vince Haley, *Assistant to the President and Director of the Domestic Policy Council*
Russell Vought, *Assistant to the President and Director of the Office of Management and Budget*

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The December 18, 2025 response of presidential staff to what was submitted:  
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/2025/12/letter-to-the-smithsonian-review-of-smithsonian-exhibitions-and-materials/>

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Meet the Obama alum working to protect the legacy of Native communities

“ We are at our strongest when we rely on culture and put what makes us unique, front and center.”
—Charlie Galbraith

For over 20 years, lawyer and advocate Charlie Galbraith has lived those words, building a life dedicated to the preservation of Native American communities. His work addressing the needs of Native Americans would take the teachings and legacy of his Navajo roots all the way to the White House. More at <https://www.obama.org/stories/meet-the-obama-alum-working-to-protect-the-legacy-of-native-communities/>

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*“Most people don’t understand what a library does for me, and I’ve tried to explain it to them. All I know is that I feel energized when I’m in one. My pulse quickens when I walk through the stacks. I feel like an explorere surveying on an uncharted shore Lost worlds are here waiting to be discovered. Ancient worlds; no more substantial than the numbers of ideas or words of those who dream them. Mythical worlds. Worlds of limitless dimensions. Libraries are medieval forests making oppportnity and danger; every aisle is a path, every catalog reference a clue to the loction of the Holy Grail.”*

== Jack Cavanaugh

## **Native American Friends Advocacy Committee on National Legislation House and Senate Pass Interior Appropriations Bill, Reject Most Proposed Cuts for Indian Country**

On January 15, 2026, the Senate passed H.R. 6938 (Commerce, Justice, Science; Energy and Water Development; and Interior and Environment Appropriations Act, 2026). This bill funds three areas of government, including the Department of the Interior, through September 30, 2026. Funding for Indian Country in this bill is [largely maintained at previous levels](#), despite pressure from the executive branch to make drastic cuts.

Last spring, the Trump administration [released a budget proposal](#) that would have gutted approximately \$1 billion in funding for Indian country. This included a proposal to functionally end the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) Education Construction Fund, which maintains and builds schools operated by the BIE. FCNL reported on this proposal and lobbied against it. You can read our analysis of the program [here](#) and [here](#). BIE funding was protected in the final legislation.

Beyond school construction, the appropriations package preserves broader Indian education funding, including operational support for BIE schools and grant programs that serve 183 schools and 33 Tribal colleges and universities. These continued appropriations help sustain teacher staffing, Native language and cultural programs, scholarships, and connectivity for remote learning. All this was threatened by the administration's budget proposal but upheld by Congress in H.R. 6938.

## **20th Annual Government-to-Government Consultation on Violence Against Women**

From January 21-23, the Department of Justice's Office of Violence Against Women hosted its annual consultation period with tribal governments. The consultation solicited tribal input on administering VAWA-related funds and programs, enhancing safety from domestic and sexual violence, strengthening federal responses to violent crime, and improving access to crime information systems—all central to addressing the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women/Persons (MMIW/P) crisis.

To learn more about what [tribal governments are prioritizing](#) in the work to end violence against Native women, visit our partners at the [National Indigenous Women's Resource Center](#), who are leading the struggle against the epidemic of MMIW/P.

## **Representative Doug LaMalfa Passes, Leaving Behind Momentous Legacy**

Rep. Doug LaMalfa passed away in January. He consistently championed land management, forestry, and agricultural issues, all of which are central to tribal nations. Prior to his death, he introduced the [Indian Buffalo Management Act](#). In a press release published the first time the bill was introduced (2023), Congressman LaMalfa [stated](#):

"This bill will help bolster Tribal sovereignty, create economic opportunities, and ensure a stable supply of nutritious, locally sourced protein. Additionally...this program will greatly help with the InterTribal Buffalo Council's (ITBC) goal of restoring buffalo herds on Indian reservation lands."

U.S. Senators Martin Heinrich (NM) and Markwayne Mullin (OK) reintroduced the bill this Congress. This legislation directs the Department of the Interior to collaborate with tribes and tribal organizations to support the development, ownership, and management of buffalo and buffalo habitat on Indian lands.

The American plains bison sustained a significant portion of Native American tribes in North America [for centuries](#). Several Native American tribes [used every part of the bison](#) for food, clothing, shelter, tools, jewelry, and in ceremonies.

Prior to European colonization there were [between 30 and 60 million bison](#). At the time, they were the widest-ranging large mammal in North America. During westward expansion in the 1870s, U.S. government officials sought to [exterminate the plains bison](#) by forcing Native Americans to surrender to the reservation system. The U.S. Army allowed animal hunters use their forts as bases of operation and did little to enforce treaty obligations forbidding colonists from hunting on Indian lands.

This legislation seeks to rectify this injustice by restoring food sovereignty to tribes.

## What We're Reading

- [Millions in Mental Health Funding for Indigenous Communities Restored | Indian Country Today](#)
- [The Miccosukee Tribe Blocked Alligator Alcatraz. Then Trump Blocked a Bill to Return their Land. | Grist](#)
- [In Kane County's New Bison Herd, a Chance for Native Americans to Reclaim What's Lost | Chicago Sun-Times](#)
- [Michigan Spent \\$1.1M Probing Tribal Boarding Schools | The Daily Mining Gazette](#) (note: report has not yet been published)[The Prediction Market Boom is Posing an Existential Threat to American Indian Gaming | Brookings](#)

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|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <p><b>Rachel Overstreet</b><br/><i>Legislative Representative for Native American Advocacy<br/>Friends Committee on National Legislation</i></p> |
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### **Kaylin Henderson**

*Assistant for Native American Advocacy*

### **Program**

***They lobby Congress to advocate for tribal sovereignty, equitable land rights, equal access to resources, and environmental justice.***

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**I've read too many books to believe what I am told." —Suheir Hammad**

## Lake Tahoe tribe's land returned | Six new names in Epstein files | San Jose mayor's fundraising splash



Miss the newspaper? [The Mercury News](#) and [East Bay Times](#) e-editions fit our printed pages on your screens.

Washoe people's ancestral home returned: The tribe lived around Lake Tahoe for thousands of years but was pushed out during the Gold Rush. Now, 175 years later, an environmental group will return part of the land to the Washoe people **after a sale from the city of Santa Clara.**

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/feb/11/washoe-tribal-land-return-california>

Many of us support "The **\*Sogorea Te Land Trust\*** [which] is an urban land trust founded in 2012 with the goals of returning traditionally Chochenyo <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chochenyo\\_people](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chochenyo_people)> and Karkin <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karkin\\_people](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karkin_people)> lands in the San Francisco Bay Area to indigenous stewardship and cultivating more active, reciprocal relationships with the land. We pay the "Shuumi Land Tax, which asks non-indigenous people living on Ohlone land to pay dues for the land that they live on." <https://sogoreate-landtrust.org>

Here is **\*GREAT\*** news about, what non-indigenous people call, the **"\*Washoe" Tribe\*** buying over 10,000 acres of land north of Lake Tahoe from the city of Santa Clara. Many, or most, of us have vacationed around Lake Tahoe or Reno, admired beautiful Washoe baskets, or even owned or rented homes or rooms built on Washoe homelands. The **\*core\*** homelands covered 3.5 **\*M\***illion acres for thousands of years! See the **\*Waší·šiw Land Trust\*** website for more information, pictures, and to donate. <https://wasi-siwlandtrust.or>

**The following news story is non-commercially reposted from \*The Mercury News, \*Feb. 11 & 12, 2026.**

<https://www.mercurynews.com/2026/02/11/tribe-buys-10000-acres-north-of-lake-tahoe-from-city-of-santa-clara-in-historic-land-deal/>?

## **Sale of Loyaltan Ranch comes 175 years after Washoe people were forced from lands during Gold Rush**

By Paul Rogers <<https://www.mercurynews.com/author/paul-rogers/>> |pictures here) [progers@bayareanewsgroup.com](mailto:progers@bayareanewsgroup.com) | Bay Area News Group PUBLISHED: February 11, 2026 at 12:01 AM PST | UPDATED: February 12, 2026 at 9:08 AM PST

In the 1850s, settlers from around the world poured into California to seek their fortunes during the Gold Rush. The Washoe people, who had lived around Lake Tahoe for thousands of years, were pushed out.

Farming, logging and mining took over their traditional territory in the Sierra Nevada, leading at times to violent conflicts. Now, 175 years later, the tribe is getting some of its land back.

In a deal that was scheduled to close late Tuesday, the Northern Sierra Partnership <<https://www.mercurynews.com/2020/06/29/breathtaking-lake-forests-north-of-lake-tahoe-preserved-in-14-million-deal/>>, an environmental group based in San Francisco, has helped the tribe purchase 10,274 acres north of Lake Tahoe from the city of Santa Clara for \$6 million.

The land, which is home to herds of pronghorn antelope, mountain lions, wolves, mule deer and groves of aspen trees, was originally planned for geothermal development when Santa Clara city leaders bought it nearly 50 years ago. But that never panned out. Two years ago, the city decided to sell the property which is roughly the same land area as the entire city of Santa Clara, but is located in one of the most remote parts of the state.

“Our tribal members are really excited,” said Serrell Smokey, chairman of the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California. “Being able to regain the land is part of a healing process for our people. It’s important to say that we have something.”

Historically known as Loyaltan Ranch, the vast, sweeping landscape extends across parts of Sierra and Lassen counties about 35 miles north of Lake Tahoe, in a sparsely populated area between Highway 395 and Highway 49. The sale is one of the largest examples of a growing trend in California in which environmental groups and state agencies are helping tribes acquire ancestral lands, often centuries after they were forcibly removed.

In November, the state Wildlife Conservation Board approved contributing \$5.5 million toward the deal. That money came from Proposition 117, a measure passed by California voters in 1990 to ban the sport hunting of mountain lions and set aside \$30 million a year to purchase habitat for deer, mountain lions, and other wildlife. The rest of the money came from private donations, with efforts led by the Northern Sierra Partnership and the Feather River Land Trust, based in Plumas County.

“It’s a huge property,” said Lucy Blake, president of the Northern Sierra Partnership. “On the east side, there are large sagebrush flats that climb up into conifer forests and aspen groves. It has a lot of springs. It’s very rich in wildlife. When we’re out there, we’ve seen herds of pronghorn antelope and golden eagles. It’s very vast and beautiful. A classic Western landscape.”

Under the grant agreement from the state, the land cannot be heavily developed. Zoned for agricultural use, it will be kept as open space, Smokey said. The tribe plans to use it for ceremonies, restore groves of pinyon pine trees whose pine nuts are a traditional Washoe food source, build a couple of caretaker homes, a native plant nursery, and buildings to support firefighting and for programs to help young tribal members learn about their language and culture.

The owner of the property will be a new non-profit organization set up by the tribe last year, called the Waší-šiw Land Trust.

“It’s a full circle,” said Smokey, whose great-grandmother once lived a few miles from the property. “Getting our people back onto the lands is a culmination of healing from the historical trauma of being removed from them. Having land we can call our own will help us reclaim the things we used to do: ceremonies, conservation, restoration.”

The tribe has about 1,400 members who live nearby around Lake Tahoe in California and Nevada. Its impact on the region is evident in many places.

In fact, the word “Tahoe” comes from the Washoe word “Da ow,” which means “lake.” And the northeast portion of Lake Tahoe, which includes Incline Village, Crystal Bay and Sand Harbor State Park, is located in Washoe County, Nevada.

In 1977, Santa Clara purchased Loyalton Ranch for \$1.6 million, according to city records.

When plans for a geothermal energy field for the city’s municipal utility didn’t materialize and after a 2020 wildfire burned fences and a few small buildings on the property, the city council decided to sell the property.

“We have been holding it for decades,” said Santa Clara Mayor Lisa Gillmor. “I’m really happy the tribe got their funding, and they were able to close on it. I guess our investment paid off in the long run. It wasn’t for quite what we thought. But it has been put to good use.”

In 2022, the city had the property appraised for \$4.3 million. Several councilmembers visited it then.

“The property is huge. It’s beautiful. It’s very relaxing to be out there. We could use some of that right about now,” Gillmor said.

The property, which the tribe will rename the Wélmelti Preserve, a reference to the name of the Washoe people who lived in the area historically, is bordered by the Tahoe National Forest and the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest.

The tribe’s land trust is working to raise \$2 million in additional funds to help with restoration and stewardship projects on the property.

With the deal, the Northern Sierra Partnership has now helped preserve 164,000 acres across the Sierra Nevada — an area nearly six times the size of the city of San Francisco — since it was founded in 2007 <https://www.mercurynews.com/2009/10/27/prominent-silicon-valley-couple-aims-to-save-100000-acres-in-the-sierra-nevada/>

“These acquisitions are one of the most exciting developments in land conservation in America today,” Blake said of partnerships to restore tribal lands. “I hope this is the tip of a very big iceberg. It has been the most exciting project we’ve ever worked on.”

- Watch: Aerial footage of “classic Western landscape” that city of Santa Clara sold to Lake Tahoe-area tribe for \$6 million  
<<https://www.mercurynews.com/2026/02/12/watch-aerial-footage-of-classic-western-landscape-that-city-of-santa-clara-sold-to-lake-tahoe-area-tribe-for-6-million/>>

- Students ask Saratoga council to advocate for indigenous tribe recognition  
<<https://www.mercurynews.com/2026/02/11/students-ask-saratoga-council-to-advocate-for-indigenous-tribe-recognition/>>

## [House GOP pushes strict proof-of-citizenship requirement for voters ahead of midterm elections](#)

### **Texas Democrat Henry Cuellar Joins House GOP to Pass Voter Suppression Bill**

Experts and watchdog groups slammed the bill, which would also require states to share voter information with the Department of Homeland Security.

### **Native activists set up prayer camp outside Minneapolis ICE detention center**

<https://minnesotareformer.com/2026/02/10/native-activists-set-up-prayer-camp-outside-minneapolis-ice-detention-center/>

## [Job Corps funding law boosts outlook as SNJC plans weekly student](#)



[arrivals, hires staff](#) [Job Corps to remain open through June 2027 after federal law secures funding and limits campus closures. Legal battles over program's future continue.](#)  
[Read more...](#)

## [AG Bonta deals cardrooms a defeat in their battle with the tribes](#)

**CAPITOL WEEKLY, BRIAN JOSEPH:** "New regulations approved this month will dramatically change the operations of California's cardrooms and are expected to take a sizable bite out of not only their revenues but that of several cities.

The changes, however, are in line with what the state's gaming tribes have been pushing for."

**Civilized nations build libraries; *lands that have lost their soul close them down.***

*—Toby Forward*

## It's about to get easier for Trump to fire federal workers

Presidents come and go. But federal civil servants serve through many administrations, protected by law from being punished for their personal political beliefs.

**Donald Trump is ending that for tens of thousands of federal workers.**

On February 5, Trump's administration finalized Schedule F — the biggest civil service change in over a century.

[team@vortexpac.com](mailto:team@vortexpac.com)

**NPR:**

Starting March 9, 2026, tens of thousands of federal employees can be stripped of job protections and converted to at-will workers who can be fired for any reason, **including political disloyalty.**

## The Senate Vote That Could Change Public Lands Forever

**This week Republicans are pushing a legal maneuver that would undo a century of public land protections — starting with America's most beloved wilderness.**

On January 12th, House Republicans passed [House Joint Resolution 140](#) along party lines.

At first glance, it looked like another chapter in a long-running fight over the Boundary Waters — the latest attempt to undo protections put in place after years of scientific review concluded that sulfide-ore mining upstream posed an unacceptable risk to one of the most pristine watersheds in North America.

On its face, that's exactly what the resolution does. It would overturn President Biden's mineral withdrawal in Minnesota's Rainy River watershed, reopening the door to mining that could permanently contaminate the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Voyageurs National Park.

That alone is a five-alarm fire that I'll address in this piece. But HJR 140 is far more dangerous than it appears.

In passing it, the House did something that has never been done before. Republicans invoked the **Congressional Review Act** not to overturn a regulation, not to undo a late-term agency rule, but to retroactively erase a land withdrawal — one of the oldest and most durable conservation tools in American law. The distinction matters a lot

More at: <https://morethanjustparks.substack.com/p/the-senate-vote-that-could-change?r=5z4zi5>

**Mental health advocate dies in tragedy:** Celinda Gonzales spoke up about suicides among Northern California tribes. She was found dead earlier this month as a victim in a murder-suicide. CalMatters profiled her work in 2020. [Read more here.](#)