



**Central Council of the Tlingit & Haida
Indian Tribes of Alaska**

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June 24, 2025

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dan Sullivan
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nick Begich
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Sent via email

**RE: Tlingit & Haida Opposition to H.R. 1, "The One Big Beautiful Bill Act" and SENR 2025
Draft Legislation — Direct Threats to Alaska's People, Resources, and Future**

Dear Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan, Congressman Begich,

On behalf of the Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (Tlingit & Haida) and the 38,000 tribal citizens whom we represent, I write to express grave concern regarding current proposed legislation that directly threatens the well-being of Alaskans, including proposed cuts to clean energy, food assistance, health care, and the sale of public lands.

First, we urge you to oppose H.R. 1, also known as the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act." While this bill has been packaged as a reconciliation measure, its provisions would have far-reaching, negative consequences for Alaska—undermining food security, threatening our lands and forests, jeopardizing public health, and eliminating critical investments in clean energy so badly needed in our rural communities.

Tlingit & Haida is especially concerned with the following components:

Rollback of Clean Energy and Climate Resilience Programs

Title IV and Title VIII of H.R. 1 would repeal major climate and energy resilience investments that Tribes and coastal communities need. These include rescissions of the



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Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, clean heavy-duty vehicle grants, port pollution mitigation programs, low-emissions electricity, and environmental justice block grants.

These cuts will stifle renewable energy deployment in rural Alaska—where microgrids, solar, and hydro projects are essential to reduce diesel dependence. This bill also has the potential to gut resources that Tribes and coastal communities rely on to address intensifying weather patterns resulting in glacial floods, landslides, and fisheries decline.

Erosion of Food Assistance Programs

Under Title I, changes to the Thrifty Food Plan and increased work requirements (Sec. 10001–10003) would restrict access to SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) for many rural and Tribal households already struggling with food insecurity and high grocery costs. New state match requirements and cost-sharing provisions (Sec. 10006) place further burdens on Alaska's already strained social safety nets.

We call on Congress to prohibit any implementation of SNAP or Medicaid work requirements in states that are not meeting timely processing benchmarks. States should not be allowed to impose work requirements when they are not delivering the basic services those requirements are meant to complement.

These policies reflect a deep misunderstanding of rural subsistence economies and ignore the reality that many Alaskans, especially in Native communities, lack access to formal employment opportunities due to remoteness, language barriers, or health constraints.

Cuts and Barriers to Healthcare Access

Title IV, Subtitle D and Title XI impose new restrictions on Medicaid, CHIP, and the Affordable Care Act. These changes would increase red tape for enrollees, cut retroactive coverage, and limit eligibility for legally present noncitizens—potentially jeopardizing care for Alaska Native people born outside the U.S., including in Canada.

With nearly 40% of Alaskans covered by Medicaid, cuts to Medicaid would cause catastrophic impacts within our families, our communities, and our healthcare system—the largest employer in the state.

This bill also imposes work requirements for Medicaid (Sec. 44141) and denies gender-affirming care funding, directly harming vulnerable populations and undermining health equity.



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Privatization and Exploitation of our Traditional Homelands / Public Lands

Title VIII accelerates oil and gas leasing in the Arctic Coastal Plain (Sec.80121) and mandates timber production in National Forests, including provisions that likely target the Tongass National Forest—a vital carbon sink, salmon stronghold, and our traditional homelands.

H.R. 1 weakens NEPA environmental review (Sec.80151–80152), promotes timber contracts, and cuts funding to the U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service (Sec.80301–80304). It opens the door for extractive industry expansion, including mining, on sacred and ecologically significant lands, without meaningful Tribal consultation or consent.

Additionally, we write to express strong opposition to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee's 2025 proposed legislation. While framed as an economic and energy strategy, the bill undermines Alaska's long-term well-being by prioritizing fossil fuel expansion, mandating public land sales, cutting clean energy incentives, and weakening essential services like food assistance and healthcare.

Tlingit & Haida urges you to reject this bill for the following reasons:

Attack on Clean and Renewable Energy in Alaska

The bill imposes new fees on solar and wind projects on public lands (Sec.304–305), effectively disincentivizing clean energy development in regions like rural Alaska where renewables are essential to reducing diesel dependence. These provisions:

- Penalize small-scale clean energy projects with acreage and capacity fees;
- Threaten Alaska Native villages and rural communities pursuing energy independence; reduce markets for value-added, non-merchantable timber-based energy solutions; and inhibit the development of locally driven, culturally aligned economies;
- Reverse momentum that supported grid modernization and decarbonization.



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Expansion of Oil, Gas, and Coal Development and the Erosion of Environmental Review

The bill requires aggressive onshore and offshore lease sales in Alaska, including in:

- The Cook Inlet, Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain, and National Petroleum Reserve—Alaska (NPR–A), areas that are ecologically sensitive and culturally significant to Alaska Native Tribes;
- Areas previously protected or subjected to environmental review, now overridden or fast-tracked, excluding opportunities for tribes to weigh in meaningfully;
- Our coastal communities depend upon the health of our land and the marine environment; allowing extractive industries to be fast-tracked through environmental review and tribal consultation is a direct violation of your trust responsibility to Alaska Native Tribes;
- By declaring existing environmental documents “sufficient” and waiving updated NEPA processes, the bill removes crucial public and Tribal input, especially for mining projects on or near Indigenous territories.

These actions ignore science, Tribal values, and the voices of Southeast and Arctic communities whose lands and ways of life are at risk.

Privatization and Logging of Public Lands, Including the Tongass

The bill mandates the sale of Bureau of Land Management and National Forest lands, including in Alaska, for housing (Sec.301) and calls for increasing timber sales and long-term logging contracts on National Forest lands (Sec.302).

The Tongass National Forest, the home of Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples, faces renewed pressure for large-scale logging and privatization under the guise of economic development. Broadly speaking, the bill is yet another example of the continued undervaluing and exclusion of Tribal priorities and demonstration of a lack of respect for sovereignty within our traditional homelands. The proposed sale of land within the Tongass comes amid a historical lack of recognition, continued breakdown, and persistent undervaluing of Tribal input in stewardship and decision-making processes that affect our traditional territories, our way of life, and our people. Furthermore, the bill bypasses environmental review, Tribal consultation, and local control, threatening the forest’s carbon sink capacity and productive salmon habitat.



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The draft bill:

- Conflicts with the Joint Secretarial Order on Fulfilling the Trust Responsibility to Indian Tribes in the Stewardship of Federal Lands and Waters (Joint Secretarial Order 3404, Fulfilling the Trust Responsibility to Indian Tribes in the Stewardship of Federal Lands and Waters (November 15, 2021));
- Contradicts federal responsibility to uphold obligations to subsistence resources set out in Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Claims Act (ANILCA);
- Threatens traditional cultural areas within the Tongass National Forest that are protected or would be eligible for protection under the National Historic Preservation Act (54 U.S.C. §§300101 et seq.);
- Overlooks federal trust responsibilities via the government-to-government relationship with Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska by explicitly excluding Tribes from inclusion in the listed entities who can nominate parcels.
- Fails to articulate Tribal and subsistence rights or describe how the continuity of these rights will be ensured in the definition of ‘valid and existing rights.’

The draft bill proposes that 0.5-0.75% of Forest Service and BLM holdings be sold directly for housing and the critical infrastructure necessary for housing. This sale includes broad swaths of Tlingit and Haida territories in which Tribes have traditional and customary use rights, sacred and cultural sites, and where pre-existing co-stewardship agreements are already in place; many proposed locations within the Tongass are far away from developed areas where housing and related infrastructure are located.

The proposed text conflicts with the 1970 report from the Public Land Law Review Commission “that disposal should be of only those lands that will achieve maximum public benefit for the general public in non-federal ownership” (Aspinal, W. N. (1970). *One Third of the Nation's Land: A Report to the President and to the Congress by the Public Land Law Review Commission*. US Government Printing Office). On the contrary, given the lack of guardrails or enforceable provisions surrounding these sales, the possibility of causing irreparable harm to valued cultural assets, lifeways, and local economies is extremely high.

The proposed language excludes Tribes as parties empowered to nominate parcels for sale. Tribal consultation is mandated to occur “early and often” including consultation at each step of the review process for a proposed action (101(d)(6)(B) of NHPA). A nomination process for parcels that excludes Tribes would impede capacity to identify



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places of religious and cultural importance and those that would be eligible for consideration under the National Historic Preservation Act or to be taken into trust. This would limit capacity to preserve and manage areas of critical cultural value that will sustain Tribal heritage for generations to come.

Harm to Rural Communities' Food and Health Security

Though not detailed in this draft, the bill's broader fiscal framework aligns with proposals that would cut food assistance (SNAP) and Medicaid access—critical lifelines for many rural and Tribal residents who, as you know, already face the nation's highest grocery costs and limited healthcare infrastructure.

The bill would also compromise rights of customary and traditional use for Alaska Native people and rural Alaskans via ANILCA Title VIII, and the federal obligation to ensure this right and its continuity. Habitat fragmentation and degradation resulting from the sale and unchecked development of parcels would reduce populations of subsistence species thereby reducing access to cultural activities and lifeways. Unforeseen consequences exist for the development and continuity of local value-based economies that generate wealth in and return wealth to rural southeast communities.

Alaska Deserves Better

These bills sacrifice thousands of years of long-term stewardship for short-term profit, undermining Alaska's Indigenous lifeways, environment, and energy future.

We ask you to stand with Alaska's Tribes, working families, local economies, and our environment by rejecting H.R. 1 and SENR budget reconciliation in their entirety. These bills prioritize short-term gains for corporate polluters and undermine the values we share as Alaskans: stewardship of our lands, care for our communities, and respect for Indigenous lifeways.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Peterson
President