

Business Committee Meets with Congress and Biden Administration in D.C.

During the week of November 27, 2022, the Business Committee held meetings with Congressional Offices, the Biden Administration, and attended the White House Tribal Nations Summit. The Business Committee is working in D.C. to protect the Tribe's lands, waters, and jurisdiction.

The Business Committee started the week meeting with Congressman John Curtis who will be the Ute Indian Tribe's new representative in Congress beginning in January 2023. Through the state redistricting process, Congressman Curtis' new district now includes the Tribe's Uintah and Ouray Reservation. The Business Committee asked Congressman Curtis to support legislation that would protect the Indian Child Welfare Act from a bad decision in the *Brackeen v. Haaland* case currently before the U.S. Supreme Court. The Business Committee also asked Congressman Curtis to support deployment of high speed internet on the Reservation.



Business Committee Chairman Shaun Chappose, Vice Chairman Ed Secakuku, Member Christopher Tabbee, and Executive Secretary Reannin McLean meet with Congressman John Curtis

Throughout the week the Business Committee met with a number of House and Senate Offices to press Congress to pass legislative to fix the U.S. Supreme Court's *Oklahoma v. Castro-Huerta*. The decision upset over 200 years of federal Indian law to create new authority for states in Indian Country. The Business Committee discussed how the proposed fix would directly address Justice Kavanaugh's mistaken decision. The Business Committee also shared a National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) resolution passed in support of the Business Committee's proposed legislation.

The Business Committee also met with Members of the House of Representatives to seek support for restoration of lands within the Tribe's Uncompahgre Reservation. In 1948 the Department of the Interior administratively transferred these lands from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to the Bureau of Land Management. This transfer was done without Congressional authorization.

While in D.C., the Business Committee also issued a press release highlighting the failure of the Biden Administration to live up to and support the Federal government's trust responsibility. In recent weeks the Administration has taken the position that it does not have a trust responsibility to protect tribal waters and can unilaterally take tribal lands without Congressional authorization. The Administration is taking these positions in court cases that could impact every tribe.

The Administration's disregard for its trust responsibility and nation-to-nation relationship with Indian tribes also impacted the White House Tribal Nations Summit. While the Summit brought together tribal leaders from across Indian Country and Biden Administration leadership, the Summit did not provide any opportunity for discussion between tribal leaders and federal officials. In addition, despite announcing that the Summit would be limited to tribal government representatives, the Administration invited and included representatives from special interest groups, organizations, and private individuals. The Business Committee called on the Administration to work directly with tribal governments to address the issues important to tribes.