

Business Committee Testifies Before Congress on Funding Priorities

In early March 2023, Business Committee Vice Chairman Ed Secakuku and Councilman Julius Murray attended meetings and hearings in Washington, D.C. During the week, Councilman Murray testified before Congress on the Ute Indian Tribe's funding priorities for Fiscal Year 2024. Vice Chairman Secakuku and Councilman Murray also met with Congressional Offices, Biden Administration Officials and attended a Western States and Tribal Nations (WSTN) Natural Gas Initiative event on Capitol Hill.

The Tribe was a founding member of the Natural Gas Initiative. The WSTN Natural Gas Initiative is a trans-national, bi-partisan, government-led effort to lower global emissions by utilizing North America's Pacific Coast as an export route to Asia for natural gas produced in the West. The Initiative is led by United States, Tribal, Canadian, and Mexican governments at the state, provincial or national level.

Vice Chairman Secakuku and Councilman Murray started the week attending the WSTN event where they met Senator John Barrasso from Wyoming and listened to presentations from Senator Barrasso, Senator Ben Ray Luján from New Mexico, and the Vice Minister for International Affairs of Japan's Ministry of Economy Trade. Each of these presentors recognized the importance of natural gas and discussed strategies for expanding natural gas development and exports. The event included a presentation on the role of Indian tribes in developing natural gas resources.

Following the WSTN event, Councilman Murray testified on behalf of the Business Committee before the House Appropriations Subcommittee that oversees funding for the Department of the Interior. Councilman Murray testified on the need for additional funding to support Indian energy development, law enforcement, infrastructure, and broadband deployment. The Business Committee's testimony emphasized how funding in these areas was needed to support tribal economic development and growth.

From there, Vice Chairman Secakuku and Councilman Murray had a series of meetings with Congressional Offices to discuss the Tribe's FY 2024 appropriations testimony, the Honoring Promises to Native Nations Act, and a Congressional fix to the *Castro-Huerta* decision. Vice Chairman Secakuku and Councilman Murray met with Representative John Curtis to discuss broadband issues and funding opportunities for the Tribe. They also met with the House Natural Resources Committee to discuss the Committee's review of energy issues and the need to include Indian energy in hearings and legislation.

Vice Chairman Secakuku and Councilman Murray also met with the United States Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to discuss the Tribe's work to deploy broadband across the Reservation. They noted that additional funding would be needed to cover the Tribe's large Reservation and asked that NTIA work to remove obstacles to broadband deployment—including tapping into federal funding distributed to states, but available for use by tribes.