

July 21, 2005

Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
United States Senate
836 Hart Building
Washington, DC 20510
FAX: (202)224-5429

Re: Proposed Amendment to NAGPRA

Dear Senator McCain:

The Colorado Archaeological Society (CAS) was founded in 1935 and currently is composed of eleven local Chapters across the State. Our membership of approximately 2000 is very broad-based in background, with people from all walks of life: student to retiree, blue and white collar workers, businessmen, professionals, educators and, to a lesser extent, professional archaeologists. We have published the highly respected quarterly scientific journal, *Southwestern Lore*, for seventy years and currently ninety educational institutions across the United States subscribe to it on an annual basis.

Through the proposal of legislation and lobbying, our organization was directly responsible for the creation of Colorado's Office of the State Archaeologist. We work closely with the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation and have two members representing our interests on the Board of Directors of the Colorado Historical Society. We are also represented on the Colorado Interagency Archaeological Education and Anti-Vandalism Task Force which is a group composed of representatives from all Federal, State and private sector agencies involved in archaeology and historic preservation. In October of 2005, CAS will, along with The Friends of the Dunes, the National Park Service, the US Forest Service and several other entities, co-sponsor a public research symposium commemorating the creation of the Great Sand Dunes National Park.

All members of CAS come together to share in a quest for knowledge about our history. For Federal income tax purposes, the declared nature of our business is the "conservation of archaeological resources, scientific research and historical activities". We believe that it is the "scientific research" that is key to unlocking the secrets of our past.

Our organization has a long term history of respect and support for Native Americans. CAS produced an exhibit entitled *awakening Stories of Ancient Bison Hunting* which is currently on display at the Southern Ute Cultural Center and Museum in Ignacio, Colorado. This exhibit is the result of a cooperative effort between CAS, Northern Cheyenne, Northern Arapahoe, and Oglala Lakota people to develop a picture of part of America's past from the results of an archaeological excavation carried out by Colorado State University.

CAS, as an organization, supports the Native American Graves Protection Act (NAGPRA) and agrees that the religious and spiritual beliefs of all Native Americans concerning the protection of the remains of their identifiable relatives should be honored. That said, we feel equally strongly that scientific inquiry and spiritual beliefs are complementary, not at odds with each other. In the distant past the heritage of all people merge. Understanding of the earliest peoples of this hemisphere, as well as the understanding of the human heritage of all other continents, belongs to all humans. Spiritual, cultural and scientific perspectives are all important to interpret and honor this heritage.

It is the unanimous opinion of the Board of Directors of the Colorado Archaeological Society that Section 108. DEFINITION OF NATIVE AMERICAN of S-536 Native American Omnibus Act of 2005 has the potential to do untenable damage to the the understanding of our past. While the current law is not perfect, the framers of NAGPRA found a way to protect the spiritual concerns of Native Americans while preserving the ability of the scientific community to continue with important research on our prehistory. *We would most strongly urge the Committee to withdraw its support for Section 108 of S-536 and any other similar proposal to amend NAGPRA by changing its definition of the term Native American.*

Respectfully,

Thomas R. Hoff, Past President
For the Board of Directors,
Colorado Archaeological Society

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