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GENERAL MEMORANDUM 26-025

The Senate Committee on Indian Affairs Hosts Field Hearing in Alaska on Tribal Natural Disaster Resilience

From May 5-6, the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs held a field hearing on Tribal natural disaster response. The first session, held in Anchorage, Alaska, featured a roundtable discussion with representatives from the Kipnuk and Kwigillingok villages, both of which are pursuing relocation after the devastation they faced during Typhoon Halong. The second session, held in Bethel, Alaska, continued the discussion with representatives from Tribes, Tribal organizations, and federal and state agencies.

Hearing Summary

The hearings focused on the growing threat that natural disasters pose to remote Alaska Native communities and the challenges Tribes face navigating fragmented federal recovery, mitigation, and relocation systems. Across both sessions, Tribal leaders described Typhoon Halong as part of a broader pattern of worsening erosion, flooding, and severe storms that have exposed significant gaps in disaster preparedness. Witnesses repeatedly emphasized the need for a more coordinated federal approach to Tribal relocation and disaster recovery, noting that existing funding streams, agency structures, and regulatory requirements are difficult for communities to navigate and often lack the flexibility needed to support locally driven solutions. In addition to infrastructure and environmental concerns, testimony highlighted the continuing human impacts of displacement, including housing instability, behavioral health challenges, disruptions to subsistence practices, and the loss of cultural and community connections among displaced residents. Throughout both hearings, speakers emphasized the need for stronger interagency coordination, flexible funding mechanisms, and long-term resilience planning that reflects the priorities identified by Tribal communities themselves.

The TERRA Act and Next Steps

The Tribal Emergency Response Resources Act (TERRA Act, [H.R.3654](#)) would address many of these concerns by allowing Tribes and Tribal organizations to consolidate funding from multiple federal disaster and resilience programs into a single coordinated plan with streamlined reporting, permitting, and other administrative requirements. Many Tribal leaders called for solutions like those included in the TERRA Act, and some witnesses endorsed the legislation.

The Committee is accepting written testimony for the record until **June 4, 2026**. Please let us know if you would like our assistance in drafting comments regarding the natural disaster challenges your Tribe or Tribal community faces. Additionally, let us know if you are interested in supporting the TERRA Act.

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