



National
Congress of
American
Indians



AAIA
Association on American Indian Affairs

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**National Native Organizations NCAI and AAIA File Brief
Opposing President Trump's Attempt to Decimate Bears Ears National Monument**

NCAI and AAIA Highlight the Dangers that President Trump's Action Poses to Landmarks, Structures, and Objects of Cultural, Historic, and Religious Significance to All of Indian Country

Today, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) and the Association on American Indian Affairs (AAIA) [filed a "friend of the Court" brief](#) supporting the ongoing legal challenge to the Administration's attempt to diminish most of the Bears Ears National Monument. Five Tribal Nations – the Hopi Tribe, Navajo Nation, Ute Indian Tribe, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, and Zuni Tribe – filed the lawsuit last year, arguing that [the Administration's action](#) violates the Antiquities Act of 1906.

The NCAI-AAIA brief provides a national perspective on the importance of Bears Ears and the perils of the Administration's unprecedented move. In particular, they identify specific landmarks, structures, and objects of cultural, historic, and religious importance to tribal nations not otherwise represented in the case, including many Pueblos of New Mexico. According to NCAI and AAIA, all these sites and artifacts – many of which are considered sacred – face significant risk of being forever damaged, lost, or destroyed if the Administration's action is allowed to stand.

NCAI and AAIA also emphasize the unique role Tribal nations played in creating the Bears Ears National Monument. According to their brief, "Bears Ears is the first national monument protected at the request of Tribes and the first to be collectively managed by...representatives from multiple Tribes." The Administration, however, has attempted to strip away tribal involvement in the management of Bears Ears at the same time the protections themselves are eliminated.

"NCAI's brief brings together knowledge and perspectives from a wide variety of tribes – to help the Court understand how important Bears Ears is to thousands of Indian citizens," NCAI General

Counsel Derrick Beetso explained. “We especially appreciate the contributions of the All Pueblo Council of Governors – who represent the 20 Pueblos of New Mexico and Texas – in helping us put together critical new information for the Court’s consideration.”

“One of AAIA’s primary initiatives is to advocate for the protection of sacred lands and Native American cultural resources,” according to AAIA Executive Director Shannon Keller O’Loughlin. “Without the designation of Bears Ears as a National Monument where Tribal management is a cornerstone to the Monument’s protection, our sacred Bears Ears will be lost to development – and so will our faith in the government-to-government relationship between Tribal nations and the U.S. government.”

About the National Congress of American Indians:

Founded in 1944, the National Congress of American Indians is the oldest, largest and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization in the country. NCAI advocates on behalf of tribal governments and communities, promoting strong tribal-federal government-to-government policies, and promoting a better understanding among the general public regarding American Indian and Alaska Native governments, people and rights. For more information, visit www.ncai.org.

About the Association on American Indian Affairs:

AAIA is the oldest non-profit serving Indian Country protecting sovereignty, preserving culture, educating youth and building capacity. The Association was formed in 1922 to change the destructive path of federal policy from assimilation, termination and allotment, to sovereignty, self-determination and self-sufficiency. Throughout its 96-year history, the Association has provided national advocacy on watershed issues that support sovereignty and culture, while working at the grassroots level with Tribes to support the implementation of programs that improve lives on the ground. For more information, visit www.indian-affairs.org.