

STATEMENT  
OF  
SENATOR DANIEL K. INOUE  
VICE CHAIRMAN  
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS  
BEFORE THE  
JULY 14, 2004 HEARING  
ON THE  
AMERICAN INDIAN RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ACT  
AND THE  
NATIVE AMERICAN GRAVES PROTECTION  
AND  
REPATRIATION ACT

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for scheduling this hearing today.

Several years ago, we began a series of hearings on Native American sacred sites to explore how the various land managing agencies were addressing the responsibilities with which they are charged to protect and preserve sites that are sacred to the Native people of this land.

These issues are closely related to the protections that were first enacted into law in 1978 as the American Indian Religious Freedom Act.

Later, in 1990, the Congress enacted the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

Together, these laws provide a framework for the repatriation of Native American human remains, funerary objects, and the protection of cultural artifacts and

sacred places.

I think the question I would pose to each of the witnesses today is whether this framework of laws is sufficient, or whether we need to consider amendments to the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, for instance, to assure that Native people have a cause of action that they can bring when the spirit and intent of the law are not being honored.

I look forward, as you do Mr. Chairman, to hearing the testimony that will be presented by our witnesses today.