

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING  
AB 2507 (Nguyen and Soria)  
As Introduced February 20, 2026  
Majority vote

## SUMMARY

This bill restructures the office of the Governor's Tribal Advisor to become the Office of Tribal Affairs (Office or OTA) and provides specific duties for the OTA.

### Major Provisions

- 1) Codifies further the Office, which is headed by the Secretary of Tribal Affairs who is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Governor, as specified.
- 2) Provides each state agency that engages, or has programs, services, or responsibilities affecting tribal governments shall do all of the following:
  - 3) Designate a tribal liaison.
  - 4) Place the position of the tribal liaison in the executive office, reporting directly to the chief executive of the state agency.
  - 5) Ensure the position serves as the primary point of contact for tribal governments and facilitates communication, coordination, and engagement necessary to support effective government-to-government relations,
  - 6) Notify the office within 30 days of vacancy, appointment, or replacement of a tribal liaison.
  - 7) Adopt a tribal consultation policy consistent with Executive Orders B-10-11 and N-15-19.
- 8) Provides the OTA shall be advised by a Tribal Advisory Committee consisting of nine tribal chair members, with three nominated by tribes in the northern region, three in the central region, and three in the southern region. Members shall be appointed by the Governor from tribal nominations, no later than the second quarter of 2027. The members of the committee shall serve without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for all necessary expenses actually incurred in the performance of their duties.
- 9) Provides each appointed member shall serve a three-year term. Commencing the first quarter of 2028, the committee shall meet regularly, but not fewer than four times annually, at the call of the secretary. Provides the committee shall provide guidance, recommendations, and tribal perspectives to assist the office in strengthening government-to-government engagement and improving the design, access, and implementation of state programs and services affecting tribal governments.
- 10) Provides the committee shall not supplant formal consultation processes or exercise approval authority over state agency actions.
- 11) States the committee shall be subject to the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act.
- 12) Provides the OTA, in conjunction with the committee, shall do all of the following:

- 13) Review and recommend improvements to the consultation policies and consultation practices of each state agency and consistency across state agencies.
- 14) Identify barriers that limit tribal governments' ability to access, participate in, or benefit from state programs, services, and funding, including contracting practices, timelines, administrative requirements, or confidentiality concerns.
- 15) Recommend statewide strategies that recognize and leverage tribal sovereignty, governmental authority, regulatory frameworks, taxation systems, and operational capacity to advance shared state and tribal goals.
- 16) Develop guidance for state agencies on effective tribal engagement, including communication protocols, timelines for consultation, and opportunities to incorporate tribal expertise, knowledge, and stewardship practices early in the design, implementation, operation, and evaluation of state programs and services.
- 17) Identify cross-agency issues that affect tribal governments and recommend coordinated approaches to improve efficiency, alignment, and outcomes.
- 18) Provide recommendations on the appropriate responsibilities, authority, qualifications, and expectations for tribal liaisons and tribal policy advisors.
- 19) Provides the Office shall do all of the following:
- 20) Support the implementation of consultation policies and facilitate direct engagement between state agencies and tribal governments.
- 21) Provide training, guidance, and technical assistance to tribal liaisons and state agency personnel to promote consistent, culturally informed, and effective government-to-government engagement practices.
- 22) Improve cross-agency communication and coordination to ensure consistent approaches to tribal matters and avoid conflicting processes or requirements.
- 23) Keep tribal governments informed of state-level policy developments affecting their programs, responsibilities, or interests.
- 24) Track whether state agencies have established or updated consultation policies and employed or designated tribal liaisons consistent with this section.
- 25) Maintain an online, publicly accessible and up-to-date tribal liaison contact list for all state agencies, and a publicly accessible and up-to-date list of adopted tribal consultation policies.

## COMMENTS

### *Background.*

According to most recent census data, California is home to more people of Native American/ Alaska Native heritage than any other state in the Country. There are currently 109 federally recognized Indian tribes in California and several non-federally recognized tribes petitioning for federal recognition through the Bureau of Indian Affairs - Office of Federal Acknowledgement.

Tribes in California currently have nearly 100 separate reservations or Rancherias. There are also a number of individual Indian trust allotments. These lands constitute "Indian Country", and a different jurisdictional applies in Indian Country. Some are near highly populated cities like Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, and Sacramento. While others are in rural areas some 20 miles from the nearest hospital. Some are in the mountains of northern and eastern California, others in the high deserts of southern and southeastern California. While some are located on the coast, on the rivers, and around the lakes.

According to the 2010 U.S. report, California represents 12 percent of the total Native American population (approximately 720,000) identifying themselves as Native American. California's tribes are as small as five members and as large as 5,000 members.

Federally recognized tribes have a unique government to government relationship with local, state and federal governments, and are recognized as sovereign nations. Rooted in long-standing legal frameworks, tribal sovereignty is strengthened through economic self-reliance. Tribes can create their own laws, governmental structure and enrollment or membership rules for the land and citizens of their nation. California's tribes work closely with the state on environmental, legal, and cultural matters, with many maintaining tribal lands. California tribes are known for a profound, sustainable relationship with the land. For instance, the Karuk Tribe is currently leading efforts in traditional cultural burning for environmental management.

Tribes throughout the state have experienced a significant resurgence in cultural and economic self-reliance, including the development of local governments, economic activity, and gaming enterprises.

*Executive Orders issued.* For decades, tribal communities have been excluded from benefiting from state-administered programs. To improve communication and consideration of the needs of tribes, Governor Brown issued Executive Order (EO) B-10-11 in 2011. This order established the Governor's Office of the Tribal Advisor and requires all state agencies and departments to encourage early consideration, communication, and consultation with tribes when developing legislation, guidelines, regulations, rules, or policies on matters that affect tribes and their communities. AB 880 (Gray), Chapter 801, Statutes of 2018, codified the office and Tribal Advisor position within the Governor's office.

In 2019, Governor Newsom issued EO N-15-19, which reaffirmed the previous EO and added a formal apology to California's First Nations for atrocities committed and discriminatory practices enacted by the State against tribal communities. This marked a major step forward in California's commitment to acknowledge past wrongdoings and build relationships with tribes. The work to explore the historical relationship between California's First Nations and the State as well as to recommend paths forward continues through the California Truth & Healing Council.

*Governor's Office of Tribal Affairs.* The Governor's Office of Tribal Affairs is responsible for overseeing and implementing effective government-to-government consultation between the Newsom Administration and California tribes on policies that affect California tribal communities. Led by the Tribal Affairs Secretary, the Office serves as a direct link between California tribes and the Governor, advises the Governor and Executive Administration Officials, facilitates communication and consultation between tribes and state agencies, reviews and provides recommendations on state legislation and regulations affecting tribes and formulates and implements the Administration's Native American policy priorities.

The mission of the Governor's Office of Tribal Affairs is to elevate issues of mutual importance to tribal nations and the Governor's Administration as informed by meaningful government-to-government consultation and collaboration.

In implementing the Governor's policy priorities related to tribal nations, Native communities and Indigenous peoples, the Office continues to work with tribal nations to:

- 1) Improve government-to-government relations,
- 2) Advance justice and equity for California Native peoples,
- 3) Explore remedial actions to address past atrocities,
- 4) Expand tribal stewardship of ancestral lands and natural and cultural resources,
- 5) Promote visibility of the rich diversity and history of California Native cultures, and
- 6) Partner with tribal governments to bolster sound and sustainable economic development in California Indian Country.

*Tribal Advisory Committees.* Many state agencies have created Tribal Advisory Committees (TAC) as specialized bodies designed to facilitate government-to-government consultation between Native American tribes and state or federal agencies. They address critical issues such as health, environmental protection, transportation, and natural resources, ensuring tribal input on policies and projects. Key tribal advisory committees in California include: CalEPA Tribal Advisory Committee (CalEPA TAC): Advises on environmental issues, cultural resource protection, and land stewardship; the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Tribal Advisory Committee (TAC): Improves communication and advises on social services impacting tribes; and Caltrans Native American Advisory Committee (NAAC): Provides guidance on transportation programs and policies.

*Native American Heritage Commission.* In recognition of the growing sophistication of California Indian governments, the state legislature created the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) in 1976 (Chapter 1332, Statutes of 1976). This nine-member body, appointed by the Governor, works as a liaison between state, federal, and tribal governments. The NAHC identifies, catalogs, and protects cultural resources—including ancient places of special religious or social significance, as well as known graves and cemeteries—on both private and public lands in California. Additionally, the NAHC ensures tribal access to sacred sites on public lands and oversees the treatment and disposition of inadvertently discovered Native American human remains and burial items.

*Department of the Interior.* In 2021, the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) established the Secretary's Tribal Advisory Committee (STAC) to create a permanent forum for Tribal leaders to engage directly and consistently with the Secretary and other senior Department officials. The STAC is intended to ensure that Tribal leaders, along with current and future Secretaries, have a dedicated space to build consensus, exchange perspectives, share information, and provide advice and recommendations on programs and funding affecting Tribes across the DOI.

**According to the Author**

According to the author, "AB 2507 reflects the importance of maintaining a strong government-to-government relationship with Tribal governments. In my district, Wilton Rancheria is an important part of the Elk Grove community, and that relationship has made clear how important consistent consultation and engagement with Tribal governments is across state agencies. Today, many parts of the state's tribal affairs framework exist through executive orders and agency policies rather than clearly in statute, and consultation practices can vary from one agency to another. This bill helps bring greater clarity and consistency by codifying the Governor's Office of Tribal Affairs, clarifying tribal liaison roles, and establishing a Tribal Advisory Committee. This bill helps ensure California's engagement with Tribal governments is structured, transparent, and consistent moving forward."

**Arguments in Support**

The California Tribal Business Alliance writes, "AB 2507 will strengthen the state's administrative framework for government-to-government (G2G) relations with tribal governments to improve the development, coordination, and effectiveness of the state's tribal programs. Over the last fifteen years, California began an important shift in tribal-state policy through executive actions that established the Office of the Tribal Advisor and advanced consultation with tribal governments. The shift gained momentum as the Legislature began opening state programs to tribal governments. This bill addresses current structural problems by establishing a clearer administrative framework to enhance G2G relations and the effectiveness of tribal-state policies and programs."

**Arguments in Opposition**

None on file

**FISCAL COMMENTS**

According to the Committee on Appropriations analysis, "Costs of an unknown amount, potentially in the high hundreds of thousands of dollars annually, across state agencies to maintain a tribal liaison and tribal consultation policy (General Fund (GF) or special fund). Although state agencies are already required to have such liaisons and policies pursuant to existing EOs, this bill would prohibit an agency from redirecting staff resources towards other workload if a subsequent governor was to modify or repeal the existing requirement. Additionally, costs of an unknown amount to support the work of the Tribal Advisory Committee (GF). Although committee members will serve without compensation, members must be reimbursed for related necessary expenses, and it is likely the committee itself will incur expenses related to hosting public meetings. The Legislative Analyst's Office recently warned of GF structural deficits of around \$35 billion per year in the 2027-28 fiscal year and ongoing."

**VOTES****ASM GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION: 21-0-1**

**YES:** Blanca Rubio, Davies, Berman, Bryan, Carrillo, Dixon, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Gipson, Macedo, McKinnor, Nguyen, Pacheco, Ramos, Michelle Rodriguez, Solache, Soria, Ta, Valencia, Wallis

**ABS, ABST OR NV:** Alvarez

**ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0**

**YES:** Wicks, Hoover, Aguiar-Curry, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

**UPDATED**

VERSION: February 20, 2026

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FN: 0002781