

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 2507 (Nguyen and Soria)

As Amended August 21, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

This bill would rename the Office of the Governor's Tribal Advisor to the Office of Tribal Affairs (OTA) and expands its responsibilities for facilitating state agencies' engagement with tribal governments. AB 2507 also requires state agencies to adopt tribal consultation policies and designate dedicated liaisons, as specified.

Senate Amendments

- 1) Place the position of the tribal liaison in the executive office of the state agency, or in a position reporting directly to the chair or chief executive of the state agency, department, board, or commission of state government, as applicable.
- 2) Make a technical and clarifying changes.
- 3) Add coauthors.

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% 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's office, "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 it clear how important consistent consultation and engagement with Tribal governments across state agencies. California has taken important steps to strengthen its relationship with Tribal governments. However, consultation and engagement practices can still vary from one agency to another. AB 2507 builds on that progress by codifying the OTA, clarifying tribal liaison roles, and establishing a Tribal Advisory Committee. These changes will help create a more consistent and coordinated approach to government-to-government engagement and ensure Tribal governments are engaged early when decisions may affect their communities."

Arguments in Support

According to the Wilton Rancheria, "for decades, tribal governments primarily engaged with the federal government, consistent with the federal trust responsibility. Over the last fifteen years, California has taken important steps to engage tribal governments through consultation and by opening state programs to tribal participation. These steps were necessary and meaningful, but they also revealed a fundamental challenge: many state programs affecting tribal governments were not designed with tribal governments in mind. We have seen this most clearly in housing. Programs were created with good intentions, but without sufficient tribal input, resulting in barriers that made them difficult to access or ineffective in practice. By codifying the Office of

Tribal Affairs within the Governor's Office, establishing a Tribal advisory Committee, and ensuring tribal liaisons are located within agency executive offices, this bill creates a clearer and more consistent framework for engagement."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

- 1) According to the Senate Committee on Appropriations analysis, "Unknown, potentially significant costs for state agencies to designate tribal liaisons and adopt consultation policies (General Fund and various special funds). Actual costs will range from absorbable to the low hundreds of thousands of dollars per entity, depending on whether an agency has already implemented these requirements.
- 2) Unknown cost pressures for the OTA to review and support the implementation of state agencies' tribal consultation policies, to the extent additional staff time or resources are required to meet the office's expanded responsibilities.
- 3) Unknown costs to support the Tribal Advisory Committee (TAC), including travel and other necessary expenses for conducting meetings and providing recommendations to the OTA and state agencies (General Fund)."

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

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 78-0-2

YES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

ABS, ABST OR NV: Muratsuchi, Celeste Rodriguez

UPDATED

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