

For Immediate Release: September 22, 2020

Contact:

Angel Amaya, aamaya@worc.org, (361) 779-2572

Tracie Moss, tmoss@westernnativevoice.org, (406) 869-1938

Devero Yellow Earring, dyellowearring@ndnativevote.org, (701) 226-9378

PRESS RELEASE

Savanna's Act Passes U.S. House

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Yesterday, the U.S. House passed [Savanna's Act, S. 227](#), and the bill is now on its way to President Trump's desk to be signed. Savanna's Act was introduced in the Senate in 2017, and spent years stalled out until this week. This landmark bill makes law enforcement accountable for responding to missing and murdered Indigenous peoples cases, and increases communication between federal, state, and tribal officials. It also increases data collection related to these cases by requiring the Department of Justice to maintain a nationwide database for missing and murdered indigenous women (MMIW).

Savanna's Act is named after Savanna Greywind, a pregnant 22-year-old North Dakota woman and member of the Spirit Lake Nation, [who was brutally murdered in 2017](#). Indigenous women face more violence than any other group. According to the National Institute of Justice, [at least 84 percent of Indigenous women](#) have been the target of sexual or other violence in their lifetimes. The bill will give voice and help bring justice for members of the indigenous communities when their loved ones are murdered or go missing, and helps to address the epidemic of violence towards indigenous women across the country.

"This is very personal to every Indigenous woman. Most Indigenous women have a story of a friend or relative who has gone missing or has been murdered. With the passage of Savanna's Act, they are going to be seen and heard and their stories will be told. There is still so much work that needs to be done and when the bill is signed, it will open up the conversation on a national level to address root causes of the widespread violence and injustice towards Indigenous women and all women of color. A proactive and preventative approach for our communities is vital towards building a safer future with unity and human dignity upheld by all agencies involved."- **Marci McLean, Executive Director of Western Native Voice**

"The passing of this bill would mean a lot to Indian Country and although it won't bring Savanna back, it can provide Savanna and her family some semblance of justice. This can be one good thing that comes from a horrible murder that has happened right here in our own state and has affected Native communities across North Dakota and beyond. Considering recent events of the pandemic, it would also help North Dakota and the rest of the nation set a better precedent at least in terms of how the law handles our Missing and Murdered Indigenous people." - **Lisa Casarez, North Dakota Native Vote Board of Directors**

###

North Dakota Native Vote (NDNV) counteract the ongoing colonization of our lands, minds, and bodies by identifying systems that continue to subjugate our communities. We work to learn disparities in civil rights, food systems, energy security/democracy, climate chaos, and policy that disproportionately affects our people and how we interact within and contribute to these systems.

Dakota Rural Action (DRA) organizes people and builds leadership while developing strong allied relationships. We protect environmental resources, advocate for resilient agriculture systems, and empower people to create policy change that strengthens their communities and cultures.

Western Native Voice is a non-profit, non-partisan social justice organization working to inspire Native leadership through community organizing, education, leadership, and advocacy. With 7% of Montana's population being Native American living almost evenly split between reservation and urban areas, WNV organizes in both rural and urban communities using a culturally tailored community organizing and citizen education model to build Native leadership.

The Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) is a network of grassroots organizations that span seven of the Western states with more than 15,000 members, whose mission is to advance the vision of a democratic, sustainable, and just society through community action. Headquartered in Billings, Montana, WORC also has offices in Colorado and Washington, D.C.