

**Testimony re: SB 111  
House Federal and State Affairs Committee  
Presented by Steve Ortiz  
on behalf of  
Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation  
March 18, 2013  
9:00 A.M.**

**Good Morning Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:**

**My name is Stephen Ortiz, “Mon-Wah” Chairman of the Tribal Council of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation. As you may know, the Prairie Band Nation is one of the Four Kansas Native American Indian Tribes. The Prairie Band Reservation is located about 20 minutes north of Topeka.**

**I am here today to testify in support of Senate Bill 111 which would create a “Native American Legislative Day at the Capitol.” The first Wednesday in February starting in 2014 and each year thereafter would be designated “Native American Legislative Day at the Capitol.”**

**Establishing a “Native American Legislative Day at the Capitol” is an excellent step towards recognizing the rich culture and history of the Four Kansas Tribes and the integral part they play in Kansas history. You have heard of the many Kansas counties and towns that have Indian names, for example: Shawnee, Wabaunsee, Wyandotte, and Pawnee.**

**Interest in Kansas Tribes’ customs and traditions continues to grow and Kansas Tribes see increased attendance at the Pow-wows and other tribal cultural events. The desire within the State to work with Tribal Nations on common goals and interests also continues to grow and develop. Thus, I believe it is right and fitting to**

**set aside a special day to recognize the numerous positive attributes that the Four Kansas Tribes bring to the State of Kansas.**

**The purpose of the “Native American Legislative Day at the Capitol” is not only to celebrate the unique culture and history of Kansas Tribes but of equal importance, to address legislative and policy issues of mutual concern, including tribal governmental recognition, economic development, law enforcement, transportation, land preservation and development, and Indian Child Welfare Act compliance. The sustained dialogue and discussion regarding such issues will further strengthen and solidify the government-to-government relationships between the State and the Tribes.**

**The “Native American Legislative Day at the Capitol” should represent a commitment by the State Legislature to continue to improve relationships between the Kansas Tribes and the State, as well as to improve the quality of life for all citizens within, both Indian and non-Indian. It is vital that every Legislator be always mindful of the thoughts and feelings of all constituents and communities, for only then can great things be achieved for the State of Kansas.**

**I am a firm believer in the importance of continuous efforts to develop, strengthen and maintain equal and just relationships between the State and its Tribal Nations, and I see the “Native American Legislative Day at the Capitol” as one of the best opportunities to do just that.**

**I ask for your support of this important and timely legislation and I will answer any questions you may have for me at this time. Thank you very much.**