

**Testimony re: SB 111
Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee
Presented by Steve Ortiz
on behalf of
Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation
February 12, 2013
10:30 A.M.**

Good Morning Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am Steve Ortiz, the Chairman of the Tribal Council of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation. The Nation is one of the Four Kansas Native American Indian Tribes. The Prairie Band Reservation is located about 20 minutes north of Topeka.

It is my pleasure to be here with you today to provide some testimony regarding the 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.”

I believe establishing the “Native American Legislative Day at the Capitol” is an excellent step in recognizing the rich culture and history of the Four Kansas Tribes and the integral part they play in Kansas history. Many of the Kansas counties and towns have Indian names: Shawnee, Wabaunsee, Wyandotte, and Pawnee, just to name a few. Interest in Kansas Tribes’ customs and traditions is growing as Kansas Tribes have seen increased attendance at Pow-wows and other cultural events. The desire within the State to work together with Tribal Nations on common goals and interests continues to grow and develop. Thus, it is right and fitting to set aside a special day to recognize the 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 am available to answer any questions you may have for me at this time. Thank you very much.