



North Dakota Native Vote
919 S 7th Street
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January 29, 2025

Testimony of Erika Red Tomahawk
Tribal-State Policy Coordinator, North Dakota Native Vote
In support for HB 1521

Chairman Ruby and members of the Transportation Committee,

I am submitting this testimony on behalf of North Dakota Native Vote, an organization founded in 2018 to counteract the systematic disparities that affect tribal communities in North Dakota. As a direct descendant of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, I strongly support House Bill 1521, which seeks to amend and reenact the motor vehicle excise tax exemption for enrolled members of federally recognized tribes located in North Dakota. I respectfully urge the Transportation committee to approve this vital bill.

During my upbringing and living within the boundaries of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, I am all too familiar with financial struggles that many tribal members face. The burden of excessive taxation, particularly on essential purchases like motor vehicles, is one of the challenges that has impacted our communities. HB 1521 provides an important solution by offering a motor vehicle excise tax exemption to enrolled tribal members, whether or not their primary residence is within reservation boundaries. This broader eligibility will ensure that more Native people have the opportunity to benefit from the exemption, helping reduce the financial strain placed on tribal families.

This bill is not just about financial relief – it is also about acknowledging and respecting tribal sovereignty. The exemption would help address disparities in how Native Americans are treated within the state of North Dakota, ensuring that we are not disproportionately burdened by taxes that do not reflect our communities' needs. It is crucial that Native American citizens are able to live and thrive without the added financial barriers that often come with living on or near reservations.

The retroactive application of the exemption to taxable events occurring after June 30, 2023, is another essential component of this bill. It ensures that tribal members who may have purchased vehicles before the bill's passage, but without the benefit of this exemption, are not left out. This provision helps ensure that all eligible individuals can access the benefits of HB 1521, regardless of when they made their purchase.

Moreover, the requirement for individuals to present documentation verifying enrollment in a federally recognized tribe within North Dakota ensures fairness and accountability.



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This provision guarantees that the exemption will be applied correctly and only to those who are eligible.

I strongly urge the committee to give a “Do Pass” recommendation for HB 1521. This bill represents a crucial step in making North Dakota’s tax policies more just and equitable for Native American communities. It will help address systemic disparities, provide financial relief to tribal members, and affirm our rightful place in the state’s economic landscape.

Thank you for your time and consideration.