**U.S. SENATE –**U.S. Senator Steve Daines (R-Mont.), Senator Tina Smith (D-Minn.), Representative Rick Larsen (D-Wash.) and Representative Ryan Zinke (R-Mont.) today announced the bipartisan “Protection for Reservation Occupants Against Trafficking and Evasive Communications Today (PROTECT) Act” to combat drug trafficking in tribal communities. The “PROTECT Act” would expand Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction (STCJ) to allow tribal nations to prosecute non-Native offenders for drug trafficking. It would also allow tribal courts to execute warrants for electronic material to better combat drug traffickers and other criminals.

“Under President Trump’s leadership, we’ve seen strong decisive action to secure the southern border and keep our communities safe. I’m proud to work alongside my bipartisan colleagues to further deliver on our promise to curb the spread of deadly drugs like fentanyl and crack down on crime. Protecting our Native American tribes while upholding and enhancing tribal sovereignty will always be one of my top priorities,” **said Daines.**

“For years, Tribal leaders in Minnesota have raised the alarm that drug traffickers are exploiting complex legal jurisdiction on Tribal land, making Native communities some of the most hurt by the opioid and fentanyl epidemics. I hear directly from Tribal leaders about how their sheriffs will routinely arrest the same people for selling drugs, drop them off with the county police, and have to arrest them again the next day. The Tribe can’t do anything about it. The PROTECT Act would help Tribes fight back against these drug traffickers. This proposal is bipartisan and common sense, and it respects and upholds Tribes’ inherent sovereignty and right to protect their people,”**said Smith.**

“The opioid epidemic has devastated Northwest Washington,” said Rep. Larsen. “Tribes in my district have continually told me about the unique challenges their courts and law enforcement face to stop drug trafficking on Tribal land. This bill would give Tribes the tools they need to protect tribal sovereignty, save lives and keep Tribes and communities across Northwest Washington safe,”**said Larsen.**

“I’ve sat down with tribal leaders across Western Montana, and the devastation of the opioid crisis is both heartbreaking and unacceptable. The PROTECT Act gives Tribal Nations the tools and authority they need to take on the opioid crisis. It’s time we empower tribal courts and law enforcement to protect their communities and save lives,” **said Zinke.**

Read the bill text [HERE.](https://www.daines.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/KAT254001.pdf)

Representatives Marie Gluesenkamp-Perez (D-Wash.), Jeff Hurd (R-Colo.), Mike Simpson (R-Idaho), Tom Cole (R-Okla.), and Dan Newhouse (R-Wash.) joined in introducing the companion bill in the U.S. House of Representatives.

**Statements of Support:**

“The Fort Peck Tribes was one of the first tribes to exercise jurisdiction over non-Indian domestic violence criminals.  The PROTECT Act would recognize our jurisdiction over non-Indian drug dealers who come to Indian country because of the gaps in jurisdiction.   Drug dealers are devastating our communities, we need all the tools possible to stop this scourge.  We thank Senator Daines for his leadership on this issue.” – **Justin Gray Hawk Sr., Chairman, Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes**

“I applaud Senators Daines and Smith for this bipartisan bill designed to combat drug trafficking.  Congress must meet its responsibilities and pass this legislation so we can keep our people safe.” – **Gene Small, President, Northern Cheyenne Tribe**

“I’m proud to support Sen. Daines’ effort to provide Montana’s tribal nations with the tools they need to combat drug trafficking. Leaving our tribal communities without the authority to hold non-Native traffickers accountable makes them a target for the cartels that are bringing deadly drugs, like fentanyl, across the southern border. I hope Congress sends this bill to President Trump for his signature.” – **Montana Attorney General Austin Knudsen**

“Protecting our community remains a top priority for our Tribal Council. We’ve already began a comprehensive strategic planning effort to expand the capacity of our courts. The PROTECT Act would support the vision we hold for our courts, to protect and serve while helping families climb out of the addiction cycle. We support the PROTECT Act.” — **Michael Dolson, Tribal Council Chairman, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes**