Native Media Freedom Alliance

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Contact: Shaun Griswold, 720-601-4895
shaun@imfreedomalliance.org

National Congress of American Indians PASSES Press Freedom resolution at 83rd annual conference

Resolution #PSC-26-058

"Support of Freedom of Information and Independent Native Media"

Introduced by Native Media Freedom Alliance

PALM SPRINGS, Calif. – The National Congress of American Indians has PASSED the Press Freedom Resolution (PSC-26-058), introduced by the Native Media Freedom Alliance (NMFA), at their annual conference. This year's NCAI annual conference was held Oct. 19–23 at the Palm Springs Convention Center. (See below for full text of the resolution)

The Freedom of Information resolution was approved by a unanimous voice vote in the Jurisdiction and Tribal Governance Committee on Tuesday, Oct. 20 during the NCAI conference and went on to pass during the General Assembly on Thursday, October 22.

The resolution affirms "*Support of Freedom of Information and Independent Native Media*" by tribal nations and citizens and is only the second of its kind in NCAI's 82-year history. This resolution builds on the first such initiative, Resolution ABQ-03-042, which the NCAI General Assembly passed at the 2003 NCAI annual conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

The adapted version of the 2003 declaration includes language addressing the right of Native journalists, independent Native-led newsrooms and Native communities to be informed about the activities of tribal leadership and governance and emphasizes the importance of "culturally-informed practices for the employment of these principles."

Founder and executive director of the NMFA, Jodi Rave Spotted Bear, upholds that tribal sovereignty is strengthened with these values, and that "Freedom of Information is more than a legal principle—it's a pathway to public trust, visibility, government accountability, community power, and an informed citizenry. These are all key components of modern democracy, which has deep roots in the Haudenosaunee Confederacy's historical representative governance model. At the Native Media Freedom Alliance, we work to protect and expand this tradition."

The Native Media Freedom Alliance (NMFA, formerly Indigenous Media Freedom Alliance) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization founded in 2016 dedicated to advancing independent media in Indian Country. Alliance member tribes have access to media expertise and support. For more information: contact@imfreedomalliance.org. NMFA also publishes independent news at buffalosfire.com.

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Founded in 1944, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) is the oldest, largest, and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization serving the broad interests of Tribal governments and communities. NCAI engages in legislative and administrative advocacy on behalf of membership and strives to ensure that member Tribes and individuals are informed and educated about all issues affecting the well-being of Tribal Nations.

Since its founding, NCAI aims to be the unified voice of Indian Country. "The purpose of the National Congress of American Indians is to serve as a forum for unified policy development among tribal governments in order to: (1) protect and advance tribal governance and treaty rights; (2) promote economic development and health and welfare in Indian and Alaska Native communities; and (3) educate the public toward a better understanding of Indian and Alaska Native tribes." — NCAI Constitution and By-Laws



Jodi Rave Spotted Bear (Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation), veteran Native journalist and publisher, is leading this initiative and NCAI Press Freedom resolution. She is the founder of the Native Media Freedom Alliance and Buffalo's Fire news. Before founding the NMFA, Jodi spent more than a decade as the first Native journalist writing on Native issues for the mainstream press. Her reporting appeared in Lee Enterprises newspapers nationwide. She has won many awards from military, mainstream, university, and Native press organizations; received Nieman and John S. Knight journalism fellowships from Harvard and Stanford; and was a 2020 Knight Science Journalism fellow at MIT. She received a Bush Fellowship in 2021 in recognition of her leadership and her vision and commitment to helping independent media better serve Native communities. She's also the inaugural recipient of the Tim Giago Free Press Award bestowed by the Indigenous Journalists Association.

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The National Congress of American Indians
Press Freedom Resolution #PSC-26-058

TITLE: Support of Freedom of Information and Independent Native Media

WHEREAS, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

WHEREAS, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

WHEREAS, NCAI supports the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Native (Indigenous) Media Freedom Alliance, the Indigenous Journalists Association, the Society of Professional Journalists, and the adherence to the standards of accepted ethics of journalism as defined by these international and professional organizations; and

WHEREAS, those standards and ethics state that every person has the right to seek, receive and impart information and opinions freely, by any means of communication, without any discrimination for reasons of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, economic status, birth or any other social condition, with equal opportunity; and

WHEREAS, it is the policy of Tribal Nations to respect the civil rights of their people set forth in their respective Constitutions and Laws; and

WHEREAS, freedom of expression in all its forms and manifestations is a fundamental and inalienable right of all individuals; and

WHEREAS, restrictions to the free circulation of ideas and opinions, as well as the arbitrary imposition of information and obstacles to the free flow of information violate the right to freedom of expression; and

WHEREAS, NCAI resolution ABQ-03-042 supports a free and independent Native press and this resolution builds upon that foundation.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the
National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) does hereby affirm policies regarding the role of a free press, and the adoption of standards and practices thereto, as vital to the foundational infrastructure of sovereign, thriving Tribal Nations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NCAI supports the principles of free speech, the rights of Native people to have access to freedom of information and to create independent media and communicate in a free and open manner; and that this includes all Tribal media, Tribal Citizens, independent Native-led media, and Tribally enrolled Native journalists.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NCAI supports the principle of intra-Tribal communications in that Native communities have the right to be informed about the activities of their leadership and governance, including provision of access to tribal public records and data collected for Tribal use, and support of objective reporting; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI
encourages the application of culturally-informed standards and practices for the employment of these principles to create Tribal regulations, codes, policies and procedures that assert sovereignty and ensure freedom of the press and freedom of information; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that these civil liberties of the People will not be abridged;

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION
The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2026 Annual Convention of the National Congress of American Indians, held October 18-22, 2026, in Palm Springs, California, with a quorum present.