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MEDIA RELEASE

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NAIHC Applauds House of Representatives for Passing the Indian Veterans Housing Opportunity Act of 2009

Bill passes unanimously, awaits Senate companion version

WASHINGTON—April 20, 2010—The National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC), the only national Indian organization solely advocating on behalf of tribal housing issues, applauds the U.S. House of Representatives today for unanimously passing the *Indian Veterans Housing Opportunity Act of 2009* (H.R. 3553). The Act broadens the ability of Indian veterans and their families to obtain affordable and secure housing in their communities after they return from military service.

Representative Ann Kirkpatrick (D-1st-AZ) introduced the bill in September 2009. The bill has since been read twice in the House Finance Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity. The most recent hearing was held in Window Rock, Arizona, and NAIHC Executive Director Mellor C. Willie testified.

“NAIHC is pleased that Rep. Kirkpatrick and her colleagues support Native American veterans and their right to adequate, affordable housing. Their leadership and commitment to Indian veterans and housing is evident through the passage of this important bill,” Willie said. “Native American soldiers who have put themselves in harm’s way protecting our nation should not be penalized for their service to this great country.”

The Navajo Nation and the Navajo Housing Authority proposed a legislative fix to Rep. Kirkpatrick, and they worked diligently to gain support from fellow housing authorities and advocates for the bill’s passage through Congress.

“I thank Navajo and Navajo Housing Authority CEO, Aneva Yazzie, for stepping forward and bringing this issue to the attention of Congress,” Willie said.

Under the current statutory language of *Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 2008* (NAHASDA), it is problematic that some veterans and their families face possible ineligibility for housing assistance because of “income” earned as a result of service-related disabilities or death. The Internal Revenue Service excludes such

amounts from the definition of “income;” however, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which administers the NAHASDA funding, considers the payments as “income.”

“This is a simple question of right and wrong. Some of our finest young men and women are being disadvantaged by their service to our Nation, and we cannot let that stand. I am honored to be fighting for Native American Veterans so that they are not punished for receiving the benefits they have earned.” Rep. Kirkpatrick said. “I was moved by the bravery and strength of our fighting men and women, and angered by their testimony of how the federal government has failed them. It is so important for Washington to keep its promises to our Veterans, and that sacred duty is not being fulfilled under the current law. I am proud to be helping Native Veterans make progress on this critical issue.”

The bill guarantees that both the statutory language of NAHASDA and HUD’s implementing regulations are in line with the Internal Revenue Code and existing regulations. It also ensures that Indian veterans do not face extraordinary obstacles when trying to procure or finance appropriate and affordable housing after serving their country.

The bill now awaits a companion Senate version.

[Click here](#) for Rep. Kirkpatrick’s media release.

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The National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC) was founded in 1974 as a 501(c)(3) corporation. NAIHC is the only national organization representing housing interests of Native people who reside in Indian communities, Alaska Native Villages, and on native Hawaiian Home Lands.