



National Indian Education Association

**Tribal Education Departments
National Assembly**

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE NATIVE LANGUAGE IMMERSION STUDENT
ACHIEVEMENT ACT – S. 1948**

The National Indian Education Association (NIEA) and the Tribal Education Departments National Assembly (TEDNA) are in favor of and support the *Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act – S. 1948*. The Act, however, could be strengthened to include greater tribal authority over language immersion programs by defining Indian tribes as “eligible entities” to receive grants. Further, inadvertently tying Title VII to Native student graduation rates through S. 1948 could potentially misconstrue the original intent of Title VII as a supplemental education title intended to address Native students’ unique cultural and linguistic needs.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

1.) Tribes as eligible entities

In order to provide equitable opportunities and access for all Native students, tribes should have equal opportunity to apply for language immersion grants. Indian tribes, typically functioning through a tribal education department or agency (“TEA”), understand their students better than any other entity. As self-governing bodies, they are uniquely prepared to assist their local schools in the development and enhancement of immersion programs by providing expertise and access to fluent speakers in the local language for which education instruction would be provided.

“Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act”.

Sec. 7401. NATIVE AMERICAN LANGUAGE SCHOOLS

...

(b) PROGRAM AUTHORIZED. -

...

23 “(2) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—In this section,
24 the term ‘eligible entity’ means an Indian tribe,
25 or a school, or a private or tribal, nonprofit
26 organization, which ~~that~~ has

- 1 a plan to develop and maintain, or to improve and
- 2 expand, programs that support schools using Native
- 3 American languages as the primary language of in-
- 4 struction of all curriculum taught at the schools.

2.) Eliminate language immersion plans direction to increase graduation rates

It is the purpose of Title VII to support eligible entities to meet the unique educational and culturally related academic needs of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students, so that Native students can meet challenging academic achievement standards. Directing Title VII language immersion grants to improve Native student graduation rates under eligible entity plans could potentially misconstrue the original intent of Title VII as a supplemental education title. An amendment to strike graduation rates would not result in the reduction of coordination or collaboration in developing education plans, rather it provides the impetus for tribes and Native communities to actively work to ensure cultural and linguistic needs are efficiently and effectively addressed as intended by Title VII.

“Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act”.

Sec. 7401. NATIVE AMERICAN LANGUAGE SCHOOLS

...

(d) AWARDING OF GRANTS. –

...

15 “(3) require the eligible entities to present a
16 Native language education plan to improve ~~high~~
17 ~~school graduation rates, college attainment, and ca-~~
18 ~~reer readiness~~ the academic achievement of American
Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students
by meeting their unique cultural, language, and educa-
tional needs.