Committee on Indian Affairs  
United States Senate  
838 Hart Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510  

October 8, 2008  

Dear Mr. Chairman:  

I am writing on behalf of the American Anthropological Association (AAA)—a professional organization of over 11,000 anthropologists that is committed to the promotion and protection of the right of people everywhere to the full realization of their culture and humanity—to urge you to hold hearings on the protection of Native American sacred sites.  

The members of your committee have done a great service for Indian Country in the past, and we are hopeful that you will be successful in future efforts to improve and protect the land, health, economy, and culture of Native Americans. To accomplish such goals, it is essential that the Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, and other related agencies remain engaged in dialogue with Native American Tribes in order to address longstanding concerns and help curtail future ones before they arise. Hearings about the efforts of these federal agencies to cooperate and consult with Tribes, with particular regard to the protection of sacred land, would help alleviate concerns expressed by Native Americans that their voices are falling upon deaf ears. We understand the difficulty of balancing Tribal, federal and private interests while respecting the rights, needs, and values of Native Americans; however, establishing hearings on the use of sacred land by these various parties would allow your committee to investigate the validity of such concerns and begin to address grievances. Federal agencies, tribal nations, and native rights organizations should receive equal representation in any hearings that occur.  

We thank you for your prompt attention to this matter and ask that you follow up with Mr. Damon Dozier, AAA Director of Public Affairs. He can be reached at (703)528-1902 extension 3008 or ddozier@aaanet.org.  

Sincerely,  

Setha Low  
President