

**STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN NEIL ABERCROMBIE**  
**H.R. 505, the Native Hawaiian Government Reorganization Act of 2007**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**May 2, 2007**

Chairman Rahall and Ranking Member Don Young, I rise today in support of H.R. 505, the Native Hawaiian Government Reorganization Act of 2007. This is a companion measure to legislation introduced by Senator Daniel Akaka in the Senate.

The purpose of the bill is to provide a process for the reorganization of the Native Hawaiian governing entity for the purposes of a federally recognized government-to-government relationship. The Native Hawaiian Government Reorganization Act would provide Native Hawaiians the same right of self-governance and self-determination that are afforded to other indigenous peoples.

Since Hawaii was annexed as a territory, the United States has treated Native Hawaiians in a manner similar to that of American Indians and Alaska Natives. This bill would formalize that relationship and establish parity in federal policies towards all of our indigenous peoples.

As a requirement of Hawaii's admission to the United States in 1959, the State of Hawaii was required to take over administration of the Hawaiian Home Lands and other former Hawaiian government lands for Native Hawaiians. Since that time, the State of Hawaii has administered that trust with the federal government retaining oversight and the ability to enforce that trust.

One of the goals of H.R. 505 is to allow Native Hawaiians to take responsibility for assets already set aside for them by law - without taking anything away from all others who have worked hard and make up the diversity of people who are Hawaii today.

H.R. 505 provides a democratic process for the reorganization of the Native Hawaiian governing entity, including the development of a base roll of the adult members of the Native Hawaiian community and the election of a Native Hawaiian Interim Governing Council charged with developing the organic governing documents of the Native Hawaiian governing entity. This governing instrument will be subject to the approval of the Secretary of the Interior.

This bill will also provide a structured process to address the longstanding issues resulting from the annexation of Hawaii. This discussion has been avoided for far too long because no one has known how to address or deal with the emotions that arise when these matters are discussed. There has been no structured process. Instead, there has been fear as to what the discussion would entail, causing people to avoid the issues. Such behavior has led to high levels of anger and frustration, as well as misunderstandings between Native Hawaiians and non-Native Hawaiians.

The bill provides a structured process to negotiate and resolve these issues with the federal and state governments and will alleviate the growing mistrust, misunderstanding, anger, and frustration about these matters.

This measure is supported by Hawaii's Republican Governor, Linda Lingle, Hawaii's Congressional delegation, and the Hawaii State Legislature. The bill is also supported by a number of organizations in Hawaii who have passed resolutions in support of enacting this bill.

I would like to thank Chairman Rahall and Ranking Member Young in advance for their assistance and support on this legislation. I ask my colleagues to support this measure and advance the reconciliation process for the State of Hawaii.