

now have. It would enhance coordination and consultation between Federal and tribal justice officials. And it would provide greater cooperation as well at the local level, between tribes and local communities, which I think is essential.

The bottom line is, we have to act to change this system to make it work for the citizens of Indian Country instead of providing opportunities for criminals and drug cartels to find ways of avoiding prosecution.

So I look forward to the testimony today that we will have from a number of witnesses about the draft legislation. I appreciate the bipartisan support from my colleagues, who have co-sponsored this legislation. And again, while we are waiting for the Vice Chair, I want to recognize others for any opening comments.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN BARRASSO,
U.S. SENATOR FROM WYOMING**

Senator BARRASSO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate what you are doing with this hearing today. I think it is very timely that we discuss law enforcement in this Committee.

In Wyoming, we are dealing with a recent tragedy on the Wind River Reservation, three young teenage girls were found dead on Wednesday, June 4th, just earlier this month. Their deaths shine light on the troubled situation for Indian youth in Wyoming. This is a tragedy for the Northern Arapaho Tribe, the Wind River community, and for the entire State of Wyoming. It brings into focus the desperate need to fight the root causes of law-breaking on Indian reservations. Crime is a cycle that can only be broken with consistent effort among our young people on the reservation.

Mr. Chairman, Federal law enforcement is not meeting the need on the Wind River Reservation currently. This reservation covers 2.2 million acres. Well, that is larger than either the entire State of Delaware or of Rhode Island. Yet BIA law enforcement struggles to keep more than two or three officers on patrol at any given time. So if you can imagine the State of Rhode Island or the State of Delaware with only two officers on patrol at any given time, absolutely insufficient.

I commend the hard work that the officers who are on patrol are doing. But the desperately need more help. There is a problem with recruitment, a problem with retention. In addition, we need better community outreach and youth programs. The officers on the reservation have to tangle with drugs, with illegal weapons and gangs on the reservation every day.

I would just like to reflect, Mr. Chairman, I have practiced medicine for 25 years as an orthopedic surgeon in central Wyoming. Early in the practice, I was called to take care of a young man from the reservation who was sent to the hospital in Casper. I was taking care of him for a broken bone, but it was a result of trauma by some other young men from the reservation on him.

The thing I will never forget is the smell in the room, because one of those criminals taking advantage of this young man chose to, with a cigarette, burn his initials into the abdomen of the other man. It kind of made a number of dots connecting together to make up the letters of his initials, of the criminal, of the person who was doing this. It was his initials, not the ones of the injured man.

It is a smell that will stay with me forever, the smell of burned flesh, one person doing this to another, which really to me highlighted and has continued to highlight the major issues that you are trying to deal with her. I commend you for your efforts and I want to help in every way that I can and work with you, Mr. Chairman. So thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Barrasso, thank you very much.
Let me call on Senator Tester.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JON TESTER,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MONTANA**

Senator TESTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I too want to echo the comments of Senator Barrasso in thanking you for bringing forward this draft legislation. I do think it is very timely. To be honest with you, it should probably have been addressed a while back. The Department of Justice, I don't think, has done what is necessary.

This isn't the time to point fingers, it is the time to talk about proper staffing, proper infrastructure, proper jurisdiction. And it is a time to work together with the Department of Justice. Hopefully they understand there is a problem here, and hopefully through bills like this one, if we can get it through the process, we can solve the problems that revolve around crime in Indian Country. Because quite honestly, at this point in time, it is a tragedy.

There's barely a week that goes by that there is not a problem. I think a lot of it has to do with staffing and consequences, once a person is picked up, how they are handled and the ability of the courts to handle people and have a place to put them once they are found guilty.

So thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it.

**STATEMENT OF HON. DANIEL K. AKAKA,
U.S. SENATOR FROM HAWAII**

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Akaka?

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I want to add my welcome to the tribal leaders as well as the national Indian Country leaders who are here in the room today, and to urge you, as the Chairman has, to continue to be part of the effort to help Indian Country.

One that is pending, and we urge you to also lobby on the other side of the Hill on the Indian Health bill. We really need to pass that. Now here, again, I want to commend the leadership of our Chairman Dorgan for what he has done in drafting this Indian Country bill on law and order, which is really needed. So the Committee intends to hear as much as we can from you and to finally make a decision.

Again, I want to urge this Committee and the leadership of our Chairman to move this as quickly as we can. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Akaka, thank you very much.
Senator Cantwell?