



U.S. SENATOR MARIA CANTWELL

WASHINGTON

Cantwell's Actions on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

Native American women and girls have faced devastating levels of violence in the United States. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, nearly half of all Native American women have been raped, beaten, or stalked by an intimate partner; one in three will be raped in their lifetime; and on some reservations, women are murdered at a rate 10 times higher than the national average.

Senator Cantwell has consistently fought for government action to reduce this heightened risk of violence that Native American women face every day. Below is her legislative history on the issue.

Legislative Actions

May 1, 2024: The Senate Committee on Indian Affairs [holds a hearing](#) on Sen. Cantwell's [Parity for Tribal Law Enforcement Act](#).

July 27, 2023: Sen. Cantwell introduces the [Parity for Tribal Law Enforcement Act](#), which would bolster tribal law enforcement agencies by helping them hire and retain tribal law enforcement officers by raising their retirement, pension, death, and injury benefits to be on par with those of federal law enforcement officers.

June 28, 2023: Following [Sen. Cantwell's urging](#), the U.S. Department of Justice [announces the creation](#) of the Missing or Murdered Indigenous Persons Regional Outreach Program, which dedicated five Assistant U.S. Attorneys and five coordinators to the task of resolving the cases of missing and murdered indigenous people. This included dedicated personnel based in Eastern Washington.

May 5, 2023: At a press conference with representatives from the Seattle Indian Health Board, tribal leaders, indigenous community organizations, and MMWIP advocates, Sen. Cantwell announces that she had [sent a letter to President Biden](#) urging him to prioritize federal funding to assist Tribes and organizations that work with Native American and Alaska Natives in the State of Washington in combatting the growing crisis of missing and murdered indigenous people.

May 2, 2023: At a Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources hearing, [Sen. Cantwell questions](#) U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Deb Haaland on the need to secure additional federal public safety resources to fight the crisis in Washington, and to investigate missing and murdered Native women in the Pacific Northwest.

February 11, 2022: Sen. Cantwell joins Sen. Murray in [hailing the introduction](#) of the bipartisan *Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization Act*, which is passed by the House and Senate, and [signed by President Biden](#) in March. Sen. Cantwell [championed key provisions](#) in both the [2013](#) and [2022](#) VAWA reauthorizations which secured Tribes' power to seek justice against non-Native perpetrators of domestic violence against Native women and children.

December 8, 2021: At a Senate Committee on Indian Affairs hearing, Sen. Cantwell [secures a commitment](#) from the senior DOJ official in charge of violence against women to visit the State of Washington and work with affected communities to end the crisis.

November 2, 2021: The U.S. Government Accountability Office [releases a report](#) on missing and murdered indigenous women, after urging by a bipartisan group of 16 legislators, including Sen. Cantwell. The report stated, in part, that a severe lack of data on the subject stood in the way of effective legislative solutions.

March 12, 2020: The U.S. Senate [passes](#), and President Biden [signs](#) the Cantwell-cosponsored *Savanna's Act*, which improves coordination across federal departments in cases of disappearances or murders of Native women and girls.

May 5, 2019: Sen. Cantwell and colleagues of hers in the Senate and House of Representatives [demand a Senate vote](#) on the bipartisan *Violence Against Women Act*, which had expired in February of 2019.

November 11, 2018: Sen. Cantwell [joins the Seattle Indian Health Board](#) in releasing its first [report](#) on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in 71 urban areas throughout the United States.

March 7, 2013: After the House of Representatives passes the *Violence Against Women Act* with bipartisan support, Sen. Cantwell [joins President Barack Obama](#) for his signing of the bill. Sen. Cantwell [championed key provisions in the bill](#) to ensure Tribes could continue to have jurisdiction over dating violence and domestic violence crimes and violations of tribal protection orders, restore tribal jurisdiction over violent and dangerous crimes such as child and sexual abuse, sex trafficking and stalking, and provide Tribes with more resources to improve and build public safety programs within their communities.

February 7, 2013: In a floor speech, Sen. Cantwell again [urges the House](#) to take up the *Violence Against Women Act* and pass it.

December 18, 2012: Sen. Cantwell [holds a press conference](#) with six of her female Democratic Senate colleagues to again call for House passage of the *Violence Against Women Act*.

May 2, 2012: After the Senate passes the *Violence Against Women Act*, Sen. Cantwell [speaks on the Senate floor](#) to urge the House of Representatives to take up the bill and pass it themselves.

June 12, 2005: Sen Cantwell [pushes for the renewal](#) of the *Violence Against Women Act*, which was due to expire at the end of the year. It passes the Senate unanimously that year.