

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN JOHN MCCAIN  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS  
HEARING ON S. 147  
"THE NATIVE HAWAIIAN GOVERNMENT REORGANIZATION ACT OF 2005"  
MARCH 2, 2005

I'm pleased to convene this hearing this morning on S.147, the "Native Hawaiian Government Reorganization Act of 2005," which my friends from Hawaii, Senators Akaka and Inouye, have worked so hard to advance.

S.147 legislates a process whereby Native Hawaiians can reconstitute a governmental entity. The history of the Hawaiian Islands, and their annexation into the United States is not one of the shining moments in our history. That said, my reservations with this legislation have been widely reported, more widely, in fact, than I anticipated. First, I want to be sure that the recognition of a Native Hawaiian government is not inconsistent with any understandings or agreements at the time of statehood in 1959. My staff on the Indian Affairs Committee has been researching this issue for me and I am sure others have been doing that as well. Second, I think this bill should not be read to release the State of Hawaii of any liabilities it has incurred or any obligations that it undertook as part of the statehood process. Finally, I feel that the resources current available to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Indian Health Service, and other Federal agencies conducting Indian programs are already inadequate to meet the needs of Indian people and I am very concerned with spreading them any thinner than they already are with the addition of a large population of new program recipients.

I look forward to addressing these issues this morning. I understand that there are many people who asked to testify today who we could not accommodate, including the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs. Regrettably, although the Committee invited the Department of Justice to testify, they chose not send a witness to today's hearing. I hope that we can get the Administration's views on this bill at a later time. Please know that the Committee will very carefully consider any written testimony it receives. I thank you all for being here.