

# LET YOUR VOICE SPEAK:

## CODIFY THE INDIAN CHILD WELFARE ACT

### Pass Legislation to Protect Native Children in Every State Bottom of Form

In an enormous victory for tribal children, families, and sovereignty, the Supreme Court has rendered a decision fully preserving the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)! Still, let us tell our representatives to codify ICWA's protections at the state level. Never again should any Native child anywhere be in danger of removal from their family and culture.

~Lakota People's Law Project

The Lakota People's Law Project provided the sample letter below [content updated] which you may personalize and electronically send your message to your state governor, state representatives, and delegates.

Dear [elected official],

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled to affirm the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), it has become clear to Native communities that states must codify the tenets of this important law to safeguard the health, safety, and cultural identities of tribal children and solidify the sovereignty of Native nations. That means introducing and passing a comprehensive ICWA-style bill that affords Native children all ICWA's protections at the state level — and nothing less.

The late Sen. James Abourezk of South Dakota wrote and championed ICWA in 1978 to counter the constant relocation of Native American children from their families into predominantly non-Native foster care. Native children placed in non-Native homes often lose access to their culture, language, and traditions. Absence of cultural identity can have both short-term and long-lasting negative effects.

ICWA prioritizes placement of children into kinship care with tribal families to protect the health of the child and recognize the inherent right of Native nations to autonomous governance and self-determination. The Supreme Court's decision fortunately asserts that "Indian" is NOT a racial classification, rather a political one, upholding centuries of precedent with tribal sovereignty.

The ruling by the Supreme Court of the United States now requires state codification for implication. We are seeking this critical action by state lawmakers and executives, to do all they can to protect the wellbeing of Native children. Please be a champion for Native children like Sen. Abourezk and do everything in your power to pass comprehensive ICWA-style legislation at the state level.

Sincerely,

[Name, address, email]

Governors and state representatives of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting region:

<p><b>MARYLAND</b></p> <p><b>Governor Wes Moore</b>  <b>100 State Circle</b>  <b>Annapolis, MD 21401</b></p> <p>Steve Hershey – State Senator</p> <p>Steve Arentz – State Delegate</p> <p>Jeff Ghrist – State Delegate</p> <p>Jay Jacobs – State Delegate</p>	<p><b>NEW JERSEY</b></p> <p><b>Governor Phil Murphy</b>  <b>The State House</b>  <b>P.O. Box 001</b>  <b>Trenton, NJ 08625</b></p> <p>Vince Polistina – State Senator</p> <p>Don Guardian – State Assemblymember</p> <p>Claire Swift – State Assemblymember</p>
<p><b>DELAWARE</b></p> <p><b>Governor John Carney</b>  <i>Legislative Hall</i>  <i>Dover, DE 19901</i></p> <p>Nicole Poore - State Senator</p> <p>Valerie Longhurst - State Representative</p>	<p><b>PENNSYLVANIA</b></p> <p><b>Governor Josh Shapiro</b>  <b>Room 225 Main Capitol Building</b>  <b>Harrisburg, PA 17120</b></p> <p>Maria Collett - State Senator</p> <p>Ben Sanchez – State Representative</p>

**RESOURCES:**

**Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)**

*Guidelines for Implementing the Indian Child Welfare Act*

<https://www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/assets/bia/ois/pdf/idc2-056831.pdf>

**Lakota Peoples Law Project** – Lily Joy (1 min video) and

Electronic advocacy letter <https://action.lakotalaw.org/action/icwa-states>

**Native American Rights Fund (NARF)**

*A Practical Guide to the Indian Child Welfare Act* (online)

Contents <https://narf.org/nill/documents/icwa/print.html>