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May 14, 2025

**The Honorable Elizabeth Warren**  
United States Senate  
309 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

**The Honorable Jeff Merkley**  
United States Senate  
531 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

**The Honorable Jill Tokuda**  
United States House of Representatives  
1005 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

C/O: Imani Franklin – [imani\\_franklin@warren.senate.gov](mailto:imani_franklin@warren.senate.gov)

**RE: Letter of Support for the Reintroduction of the Remove the Stain Act (119th Congress)**

Dear Senators Warren and Merkley, and Representative Tokuda,

I write to express my full support for the reintroduction of the Remove the Stain Act. Thank you for your continued leadership and your commitment to truth and justice.

This legislation is deeply personal. I am a direct lineal descendant of Chief Spotted Elk, a Mnicoujou Lakota leader from a long line of peacemakers. His grandfather Black Buffalo welcomed Lewis and Clark with dignity and received a peace medal for preventing bloodshed. Chief Spotted Elk carried that legacy forward - signing the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, and later leading our people under a white flag to seek protection in 1890. Instead, he and hundreds of unarmed men, women, and children were massacred at Wounded Knee and in surrounding areas. My grandmother was wounded. My grandfather Flying Horse was killed shielding others. Many more of our family were lost.

We have carried this truth across generations, often without support and through profound grief. It is not only history - it is still happening. Family lines have been misidentified, remains destroyed, and records lost. My grandfather's lock of hair (what little we had) was destroyed as a direct result of the confusion caused by this massacre and my family was deprived of a proper burial. This harm is ongoing, not symbolic.

Even his identity has been confused. He was misnamed “Big Foot,” and his true legacy was buried beneath errors that still echo in history books and headlines. My family submitted a petition to the Obama administration years ago to call for the rescinding of these medals. We didn’t meet the signature threshold, but I believe it helped lay the groundwork for this bill. We’ve kept going because the truth matters.

The massacre at Wounded Knee is well documented (even by military reports and presidential memos of the time). What’s missing is not evidence, but political will. Last year, another piece of legislation, the Wounded Knee Sacred Site bill was blocked over unrelated tribal recognition disputes. Again and again, Native history gets pushed aside by politics. And now, some of the same harmful rhetoric that once justified the atrocities against our ancestors is returning to the national conversation.

This is why the **Remove the Stain Act** matters. It is not symbolic to us. It is a concrete act of integrity - one that says what happened was wrong, and that honoring those responsible has no place in a *just* society. If this government cannot rescind medals awarded for the massacre of elders and children, what message does that send about the value of Native American lives today?

We are not asking for pity. We are asking for truth, for respect, and for action. We need help fixing these things as part of our responsibility to the next generations. It is time to remove the stain.

With deep respect for your continued efforts,  
Calvin J Spotted Elk  
*Spotted Elk Tiospaye*

