

H.R. 2362 Indian Tribal Trade and Development Act of 2011

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is H.R. 2362?

H.R. 2362 is legislation that would create a cost-free, innovative pilot project to update land-leasing practices that have long inhibited economic growth in Indian Country. H.R. 2362 seeks to bring private-sector solutions to kick-start the economy and create jobs in Indian Country by facilitating trade and investment between Native American tribes and Turkish companies.

2. Who is the prime sponsor of H.R. 2362?

The Indian Tribal Trade and Development Act was introduced on June 24th by the only Native American Member of Congress, Rep. Tom Cole of Oklahoma. The bill is the culmination of a series of discussions with various Native American and Turkish groups. In addition to Rep. Cole, all four Co-Chairs of the Congressional Turkish Caucus have expressed support for this legislation.

3. What will H.R. 2362 do?

H.R. 2362 directs the Secretary of the Interior to create a demonstration program for up to six tribes to engage in economic development with Turkish companies. This legislation allows the tribes selected for the program to develop their own guidelines for leasing land and services to Turkish companies for economic development purposes. Any guidelines must include provisions to protect the environment. The Secretary would then approve those guidelines and the Tribes would be allowed to operate under those guidelines without required Secretarial approval for every individual release.

4. Why is H.R. 2362 necessary?

Currently, economic development on tribal lands is hampered by a restrictive and archaic leasing system. This system requires every lease application to go through multiple levels of review, including surveys and thorough environmental reviews. At the end of that process, even simple leases that could be concluded in as little as six days on private land can take up to six years on trust land. H.R. 2362 aims to ameliorate the existing bureaucracy for the six tribes that will be picked for trade with Turkish companies, helping those tribes develop case studies that point the way to a better and more efficient way for tribes to conduct business.

5. Who does H.R. 2362 benefit?

H.R. 2362 comes at a time when economic challenges have shuttered local businesses and battered local and federal government entities. The Indian Tribal Trade and Investment Demonstration Project Act of 2011 is a great, cost-free opportunity to create jobs and help spur development on tribal lands. Additionally, H.R. 2362 will undoubtedly strengthen existing ties between the United States and Turkey, a key NATO ally supporting U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq.

6. Why Turkey?

H.R. 2362 capitalizes on the unique and genuine interest Turkish companies have shown in working with Indian tribes. Since 2008, scholarship opportunities have existed for Native American students to study abroad in Turkey – including comprehensive programs sponsored by Turkish universities. Interest in establishing economic, cultural and educational exchanges peaked after the first ever Native American Business Cooperation Trip, which the Turkish Coalition of America hosted in November 2010. The trip enabled 20 tribal leaders from 17 tribes in 11 states to travel to Turkey, where they met the country's ministers of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, as well as leading business leaders and prominent academicians.

In March 2011, Turkey's Deputy Trade Minister became the first foreign government official to speak at the Reservation Economic Summit – the largest economic development summit in Indian Country. Turkey will host a business conference in November 2011 for tribal leaders to further the ongoing dialogue and establish concrete steps for collaboration.

Turkey is Europe's fastest growing economy and ranks 16th in the world. Turkey's growth rate was second in 2010 to China. Turkish foreign direct investment (FDI) exceeded \$21 billion in 2010, when 78 percent of Turkish companies chose to invest in new rather than existing projects. Countries that received Turkish FDI also became some of Turkey's leading trade partners. Moreover, Turkey has the second largest construction sector in the world after China.

7. Is Turkey the only country tribes can work with?

Absolutely not. H.R. 2362 simply highlights Turkey as a starting point because of the genuine interest Turkish companies have expressed in working with Indian tribes. The purpose of this legislation is to pave the way for leasing reform across Indian Country and to facilitate trade with tribes for sound, sustainable economic development. In a best case scenario, the program will be successful enough that other international companies will begin approaching tribes with new business proposals on the heels of the pilot program.