

Subject: Fw: Tragic case of suspected domestic violence underscores need for changes to Native American missing persons alert and tribal law enforcement authority

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From: Lopez, Maria <Maria.Lopez@(edited)>

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To: Lopez, Maria <Maria.Lopez@(edited)>

Subject: Tragic case of suspected domestic violence underscores need for changes to Native American missing persons alert and tribal law enforcement authority



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Tragic case of suspected domestic violence underscores need for changes to Native American missing persons alert and tribal law enforcement authority

San Bernardino—Assemblymember James C. Ramos (D-San Bernardino) today expressed his condolences to the family of a [missing Morongo Band of Mission Indians tribal member](#) and concern about issues expressed by her family involving the investigation into her case.

“I wish to send my condolences to the family of Amy Porter whose family found her on Sunday morning in a desert area near the side of Interstate 10 in Yucaipa. It is my hope that the investigation is thorough and conducted in an appropriately timely manner.” He added, “I also hope that my legislation is signed to clarify and improve use of the Feather Alert and public safety on tribal lands.” The Feather Alert is a public alert system similar to an AMBER or Silver alert and is overseen by the California Highway Patrol (CHP). It is used in the state when Native American are missing.

Porter’s family had been searching for her for a week and had requested the use of the Feather Alert and a more speedy law enforcement search. Family and friends eventually launched their own search.

Ramos observed, “Ms. Porter’s family has raised questions about the delay in initiating the investigation into her disappearance and why the Feather Alert was not employed more quickly.” The lawmaker added, that he authored [three bills](#), now before the governor, that sought to address the questions raised by family members. The measures are:

- **AB 1863 which seeks to streamline the Feather Alert requesting process** and would allow a California Tribe to directly request the public alert and would require that the CHP respond to a law enforcement agency or tribe’s request to activate a Feather Alert within 48 hours of receiving the request. The Feather Alert has been active since Jan. 1, 2023, and California was the third state to enact the public alert. Ramos authored the legislation in 2022 that created the notification system here in California. Proposed changes to the Feather Alert were made in consultation with tribal leaders, CHP, Department of Justice (DOJ) and local government representatives. Ramos held roundtable discussions around the state and an [informational hearing](#) to increase awareness about the new program and hear from stakeholders about how the system was working and what changes would make it more effective. That hearing was followed by further discussions with tribes and law enforcement.
- **AB 2138 would create a three-year pilot program allowing tribal law enforcement under specified conditions to obtain state peace officer status.** Ramos, in an [op-ed](#) this spring, and at a [roundtable discussion](#) with tribes, lawmakers, and researchers heard why peace officer status would increase public safety on tribal reservations and their neighboring communities. A federal law known as Public Law 280 (PL 280) enacted in 1953 withdrew federal responsibility, in large part, for public safety on tribal lands. In the op-ed, Ramos wrote that PL 280 “eliminated federal support for law enforcement and courts, except for limited and specified expenditures. This has resulted in widespread confusion among tribal, local and state law enforcement agencies.” Peace officer status for tribal law enforcement officers would hasten response times and give greater investigatory power to tribes for criminal cases occurring on reservations often located in rural and isolated areas.
- **AB 2695 would require the DOJ to collect and disaggregate domestic violence crime data** so the state can better determine the scope of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous People crisis from the information that local law enforcement submits to DOJ. If AB 2695 is approved, local law enforcement would be required to note whether the crime was committed on tribal land. California is fifth in the nation in the numbers of MMIP unresolved and uninvestigated cases. Ramos stated, “While Ms. Porter’s case did not occur on tribal lands, she was a tribal member and her case may have involved domestic violence. It is important for us to understand the when and where about crimes as well as the who so that we can respond more effectively and proactively to increase safety.”

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Assemblymember James C. Ramos proudly represents the 45th Assembly district that includes the Cities of Fontana, Highland, Mentone, Redlands, Rialto and San Bernardino. He is the first and only California Native American serving in the state’s legislature. Ramos chairs the Assembly Budget Subcommittee #6 on Public Safety.