SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

October 12, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary of the Interior
1846 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke,

I am writing in my capacity as president of the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) to respectfully request the reinstatement of the National Native American Graves and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) Review Committee (RC).

SAA is an international organization that, since its founding in 1934, has been dedicated to the research about and interpretation and protection of the archaeological heritage of the Americas. With more than 7,000 members, SAA represents professional archaeologists in colleges and universities, museums, government agencies, and the private sector. SAA has members in all 50 states as well as many other nations around the world.

As you know, since May of this year the activities of the National NAGPRA Review Committee, along with those of other federal statutory advisory committees, have been suspended while the Department of Interior conducts a review to ensure their compliance with both the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) and the new administration's Executive Orders. Whereas we appreciate the desire to confirm that Interior's FACA panels are operating efficiently and effectively, we must point out that the RC plays a crucial role in the proper implementation of NAGPRA and its regulations. Specifically, the RC is charged with facilitating the resolution of disputes and making recommendations to you regarding the identification or cultural affiliation of cultural items or the return of such items. This critically important work cannot be left undone for long if the NAGPRA process, which has made great strides in addressing a sensitive issue, is to continue functioning. In addition, the situation will worsen the longer the inactivity lasts, as several positions on the RC are or will soon be unfilled.

We urge you to consider the urgency of the matter and to reinstate the RC as quickly as possible.

Regards,

Susan M. Chandler, RPA
President