

January 24, 2013

Senators Introduce Bipartisan Bill to Improve Mental Health Services & Prevent Youth Suicide

On January 23, in an effort to improve mental health services for young people and prevent youth suicides, U.S. Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) introduced the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act Reauthorization bill. The Reauthorization will help improve access to counseling for at-risk teens and promote the development of statewide suicide early intervention and prevention strategies. It will also increase federal funding for competitive grants to help States, colleges, universities, and Tribes improve mental and behavioral health counseling services. There is an overwhelming need for behavioral and mental health services in Indian Country. The bill will help increase attention and program support toward addressing the chronic behavioral issues throughout Indian Country. Overall, the bill authorizes the federal government to award up to \$44 million annually to help States and non-profit institutions prevent youth suicide.

The Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act Reauthorization is also cosponsored by Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL), Susan Collins (R-ME), Tom Udall (D-NM), Patty Murray (D-WA), Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Christopher Coons (D-DE), Amy Klobuchar (R-MN), and Debbie Stabenow (D-MI).

The reauthorization bill is named for then-Senator Gordon Smith's (R-OR) 22-year old son, Garrett, who was a student at Utah Valley University when he took his own life in September 2003. Sen. Smith authored the original bill and has championed suicide prevention and mental health initiatives.