

Senate passes legislation to gather data on missing, murdered Native American women

- AMY DALRYMPLE Bismarck Tribune
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The U.S. Senate on Friday unanimously approved Savanna's Act, legislation that aims to gather data on missing and murdered Native American women.

The act, introduced by Sen. Heidi Heitkamp, D-N.D., is named for Savanna LaFontaine-Greywind, who was [abducted and killed](#) last year in Fargo.

The legislation would improve data collection on tribal victims, improve tribal access to federal law enforcement databases and create guidelines for responding when someone's reported missing.

"This will help bring greater awareness regarding tragic cases of missing and murdered Indians in the United States," said Sen. John Hoeven, R-N.D., chairman of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee.

Heitkamp urged the U.S. House of Representatives to immediately pass her bill. She has emphasized, however, that the legislation is only a first step and that more work is needed.

"With Savanna's Act moving one step closer to being signed into law, I hope my colleagues will take up this mantle and continue to fight for legislative action that protects all women and children and promotes safety and healing across Indian Country," she said.

In 2016, North Dakota had 125 cases of Native American [women and girls reported missing](#) to the National Crime Information Center. However, the actual figure likely should be higher due to a [lack of reporting](#).

Savanna's Act would require an annual report to Congress with statistics on missing and murdered Native women and recommendations on how to improve data collection.