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Interior Department Finalizes Pathway to Reestablish a Formal Government-to-Government Relationship with Native Hawaiian Community

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Department of the Interior announced today a final rule to create a pathway for reestablishing a formal government-to-government relationship with the Native Hawaiian community. The final rule sets out an administrative procedure and criteria that the U.S. Secretary of the Interior would use if the Native Hawaiian community forms a unified government that then seeks a formal government-to-government relationship with the United States.

“This final rule provides the Native Hawaiian community with the opportunity to exercise self-determination by reestablishing a formal government-to-government relationship with the United States,” said U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell. “Throughout this two-year rulemaking process, thousands of voices from the Native Hawaiian community and the public testified passionately about the proposal. Today is a major step forward in the reconciliation process between Native Hawaiians and the United States that began over 20 years ago. We are proud to announce this final rule that respects and supports self-governance for Native Hawaiians, one of our nation’s largest indigenous communities.”

The final rule builds on more than 150 Federal statutes that Congress enacted over the last century to recognize and implement the special political and trust relationship between the United States and the Native Hawaiian community. It also considered and addressed [extensive public comments](#) during the rulemaking process, which included public meetings in Hawaii and the mainland United States.

Native Hawaiians have not had a formal unified government since the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii in 1893. In 1993, Congress enacted the Apology Resolution which offered an apology to Native Hawaiians on behalf of the United States for its role in the overthrow and committed the Federal government to a process of reconciliation. As part of that [reconciliation process](#), in 2000 the Department of the Interior and the Department of Justice jointly issued a report

identifying as its lead recommendation the need to foster self-determination for Native Hawaiians under Federal law.

“We heard from the Native Hawaiian community about the importance of this rule to preserving its culture and traditions,” said Kristen Sarri, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management, and Budget. “This historic rule provides an opportunity for a Native Hawaiian government to exercise its inherent powers of self-government, self-determination, and economic self-sufficiency. It recognizes the special political and trust relationship between the United States and the Native Hawaiian community and will help to more effectively implement the laws that Congress passed.”

The decision to reorganize a Native Hawaiian government is one for the Native Hawaiian community — not the Federal government — to make as an exercise of self-determination. If a formal government-to-government relationship is reestablished, it could provide the community with greater flexibility to preserve its distinct culture and traditions. It could also enhance their ability to affect its special status under Federal law by exercising powers of self-government over many issues directly impacting community members.

The [final rule](#), along with [Frequently Asked Questions](#) and other supporting documents, is available for review at www.doi.gov/hawaiian.

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