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For Immediate Release, August 12, 2014

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**NNABA APPLAUDS THE HISTORIC VOTE OF THE AMERICAN  
BAR ASSOCIATION HOUSE OF DELEGATES TO RECOGNIZE  
TRIBAL COURT PRACTITIONERS AS FULL MEMBERS**

PHOENIX—The National Native American Bar Association (NNABA) applauds the historic vote of the American Bar Association (ABA) House of Delegates to amend the ABA Constitution to permit tribal court practitioners to be full members of the ABA. This August 11, 2014 vote of the House of Delegates was unanimous.

“We commend the ABA for recognizing that there are three sovereign court systems in the United States (federal, state and tribal) and for amending its constitution to permit tribal court practitioners – who are not currently eligible to be ABA members – to become full members of the ABA,” said Mary Smith, NNABA president. “This constitutional amendment will – at long last – put tribal court bar admissions on equal footing with the bars of states, territories and possessions of the United States.”

The ABA has made significant strides towards inclusion but there was a glaring injustice that needed to be corrected – full membership for American citizens who happen to be licensed through a tribal court as opposed to a state, federal or territorial bar. Under previous policy, anyone licensed in a state, federal or territorial jurisdiction within the United States could join the ABA as a full member with all rights and responsibilities. That policy did not extend to those who are licensed through a tribal court of a federally recognized tribe. Thus, there was a class of persons who were denied the opportunity for full membership because they practiced solely in a tribal court. As a policy decision, the ABA had previously extended the opportunity for full membership to lawyers who practice in Guam, American Samoa, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. The same inclusive policy now applies to individuals practicing before tribal courts within the United States.

Founded in 1973, NNABA serves as the national association for American Indian,

Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian attorneys, judges, law professors and law students. NNABA strives for justice and effective legal representation for all American indigenous peoples; fosters the development of Native American lawyers and judges; and addresses social, cultural and legal issues affecting American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.

For more information contact 480-727-0420 or visit [www.nativeamericanbar.org](http://www.nativeamericanbar.org).

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