**Media Contact:** Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152
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Historic strides have been taken in Federal Indian policy in the last five years.

Federal funding has doubled, with great emphasis on education, training, and self-determination. Indian tribes and groups now set their own priorities on how funds are to be programmed. Land taken from the Taos Pueblo, Yakima and other people has been returned. The policy of termination is a thing of the past. Trust status has been restored to the Menominee. Alaska native claims settlement has been achieved. Our continuing commitment looks forward to the enactment of legislation which would speed Indian economic development and upgrade the position of Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Assistant Secretary level at the Department of the Interior.

Since 1969, Federal outlays in Indian programs have soared from approximately 8/10 billion dollars annually to some $1.6 billion requested for Fiscal Year 1975.

In addition to Interior, other Departments and Agencies participating in this worthwhile and far-reaching effort include Health, Education and Welfare - whose representatives are with us today -- Commerce, Labor, Housing and Urban Development, Department of Transportation, Small Business Administration, tile National Council on Indian Opportunity, and others over the years.

Strong currents of self-determination continue to run through the Bureau of Indian Affairs budget requested for Fiscal Year 1975.

The budget request of the Bureau of Indian Affairs includes $869,083,000 in budget authority. Within this sum are permanent funds and trust funds of the Indians themselves, Federal Highway Act contract authority, and other items not subject to appropriations.

The total request in annual appropriations is $634,682,000 the largest single item of which is $219.0 million for education. The request for social services and housing is $76.6 million, and for law enforcement on the reservations, $8.8 million. Other significant items are $57.6 million for development of tribal resources; $10.9 million for aid to tribal government; $63 million for general management and facilities operations; $51.9 million for general construction, and $70 million for Alaska native claims. Protection of Indian natural resources rights and real estate and financial trust services is proposed at $17.9 million.

In exercising their rights of self-determination, American Indian tribes and groups may assume administrative responsibility for a service program – in the past it was administered by a responsibility for a service program – or a portion of a program – which in the past was administered by a Federal agency. Additionally, the right of retrocession remains. If an Indian community government elects to administer a Federal program and later chooses to return to Federal direct services, it may do so.

The contracting provisions of this budget become a positive force in reducing the role of the Federal government in reservation Indian affairs and placing that responsibility in the hands of the Indian groups themselves.

In reference to contracting, President Nixon in his State of the Union Message of January 30, 1974, said:

"...I shall ask that the Bureau of Indian Affairs make specific plans to accelerate the transfer of significant portions of its programs to Indian tribal management, although I repeat my assurances that, while accelerated, these transfers will not be forced on Indian tribes not willing to accept them."

The pace of Indian contracting to perform their own services previously performed by the government has shown remarkable acceleration since 1969 -- from under $8 million per year in 1969 to more than $63 million in the last complete Fiscal Year, that of 1973. I refer, for example, to contracting for schools and adult education programs, for road construction, maintenance and similar services. There are indications that Indian contracting will great] exceed that figure in Fiscal Year 1974.

While Indian participation in contracting increases, it must be emphasized that no service will be lost or lessened to the tribe or group that elects to continue with BIA services.

All of these currents of self-determination find their genesis in the Presidential Indian Message of July 8, 1970.

The principles enunciated then by President Nixon find ready support in the councils of Commissioner Morris Thompson with Indian leaders. As the Indian governments make their own decisions to increase contracting for the delivery of Federal services, the numbers of employees at Bureau centers are to be reduced commensurately.

Another major action which this Administration has taken to further self-determination is to allow Indian leaders to set priorities locally. The FY 1975 budget of the Bureau of Indian Affairs reflects Indian involvement and participation in the budget planning decisions of the Bureau. We have honored the priorities of the Indians in developing the budget and we are committed to distributing the funds at the local level based upon these same priorities.

While much has been accomplished, much remains to be done.

The Administration has before the Congress no fewer than seven bills which would alleviate problems facing the Indians, and greatly enhance their economic capabilities. All of these measures have been before Congress for three years – that is much too long. The time for action is now.

One bill, mentioned earlier, would eliminate the post of Commissioner of Indian Affairs and provide for a new Interior Assistant Secretary who would have Indians as his sole concern, and report directly to the Secretary. While both houses have passed it, the Senate has attached an amendment to create a 13th Alaska region under the new Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and a deadlock has developed.

The Indian Financing Act stands a better change to give the Indians a better chance. This administration proposal would provide that:

1. Existing revolving loan funds would be consolidated, and $50 million in new funds added.
2. A new program would guarantee private loans made to Indians for up to 90 percent, and
3. A new grant program would enable the Secretary of the Interior to provide up to $50, 000 to small Indian businesses which could not otherwise get a start.

The bill passed the Senate last July, but it is still awaiting House action.

Three more Administration bills cover self-determination and education proposals.

There is the assumption of control bill whereby Indians can take over their Federal programs on demand. This is the very cornerstone of self-determination.

There is the Civil Service benefits bill, whereby Federal employees who go to work for tribes which elect to administer their own programs retain their benefits.

And there are Johnson-O'Malley amendments so that the BIA may contract directly with tribes (instead of only with State and local governments, as of now) for carrying out educational programs.

Progress has been slow. But we have our hopes. All three are combined and somewhat altered in S. 1017 which has been ordered reported by the Senate Interior Committee. The House is apparently awaiting Senate action before moving further.

A sixth Administration proposal would create an independent trust counsel authority. Such an independent trust counsel would have but a single client - the American Indian. We believe this is desirable to eliminate the conflict of interests when Indian claims and other facets of the public interest are in conflict. There have been hearings in both bodies. But no action.

A seventh proposal is of fundamental concern to reservation Indians. It would enhance self-determination by giving tribes increased control over trespassing livestock, and the licensing of traders on reservations. Only the House has held a hearing.

Although we are frustrated with the pace of congressional deliberation, there has been some fine work done.

With Administration support, in December the reservation status of the Menominee Tribe of Wisconsin has been restored – concrete evidence of the President’s reflection of the policy of forced termination.

Congress in October passed a new Indian Judgment Distribution Act by having the Secretary submit to Congress for approval plans for distributing Indian judgments (e.g. Awards of Indian Claims Commission.) This should shorten appreciably the time for getting money into Indian hands.