Polacca Day School in Arizona to be Rebuilt

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(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – President Bush's pledge on education that "no child shall be left behind" was reaffirmed today with the release of his Fiscal Year 2002 budget request of $2.2 billion for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).The request includes $292.5 million for BIA school construction – an increase of $162,000 over the 2001 enacted level – of which $122.8 million is to replace six aging BIA school facilities around the country, including the Polacca Day School located in Polacca, Ariz., on the Hopi reservation.

"President Bush and I are committed to providing all BIA students with healthy and safe schools," said Interior Secretary Gale Norton."For far too long, Indian children have been left behind. This budget request shows the Bush Administration's dedication to creating environments where the minds, spirits and aspirations of thousands of Native American children may flourish.Children can best learn, and teachers can best teach, when they aren't worrying that their classrooms will fall down."

The budget request includes $19.9 million for the Polacca Day School Replacement project that will replace the current facility as a way to eliminate unsafe conditions, alleviate severe overcrowding, and accommodate a projected increase in student enrollment. The school's main building and cafeteria were built in 1956 with portable classrooms added in 1975 and 1995.At present, the K-6 school serves 188 students from the Hopi Tribe, 80 percent of whom are housed in the portable classrooms that are too small for teachers to provide an optimal level of academic instruction.

The condition of the main school building and portable classrooms are at a point where an unsafe and unhealthy learning environment exists:the building's exterior walls have deteriorated and are not insulated, the mechanical system cannot provide needed air circulation or heating, the electrical system and power supply are inadequate to support educational and office equipment, and the plumbing system is causing problems for students and staff. In contrast, the replacement school will be a safe, modern-day teaching and learning facility serving approximately 375 elementary school students.

The BIA's 185 schools and dormitories have suffered for decades from neglect and disrepair.The five additional school facilities slated for replacement in FY2002 are:Holbrook Dormitory, Holbrook, Ariz.; Santa Fe Indian School, Santa Fe, N.M.; Wingate Elementary School Dormitory, Ft. Wingate, N.M.; Ojibwa Indian School, Belcourt, N.D.; and Paschal Sherman Indian School, Omak, Wash.

The President's request for BIA education also includes $5.0 million for advance planning and design of future replacement schools, $161.6 million to fund maintenance and repair projects to reduce the backlog of needed repairs to BIA school buildings, $504.0 million to fund BIA school and dormitory operations, and a $1.0 million increase for operating grants to 25 tribally controlled community colleges.

The BIA's mission is to fulfill its trust responsibilities and promote self-determination on behalf of Tribal

governments, American Indians, and Alaska Natives. As part of its mission, the BIA provides services to approximately 1.4 million American Indians and Alaska Natives who are members of the 561 federally recognized Tribes in the 48 contiguous United States and Alaska.