Santa Fe Indian School in New Mexico 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 Santa Fe Indian School located in Santa Fe, N.M.

"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 $23.2 million for the Santa Fe Indian School Replacement project to expand, replace, and add buildings and facilities to serve a projected enrollment of 644 dayschool students and 394 dormitory students from the 19 New Mexico Pueblo Tribes, 2 New Mexico Apache Tribes, and the Navajo Nation. The Santa Fe Indian School, a boarding school initially built in 1889 and expanded in 1918, currently serves 555 students in grades 7-12 from reservations in Arizona and New Mexico.

The buildings and facilities have deteriorated to a point where critical servicing components including mechanical, electrical, plumbing, heating, air conditioning, ventilation, communications, fire and safety systems no long meets today's standards for modern, technologically-based education delivery systems, or for the projected increase in student enrollment. In addition, the school site and 24 of the original buildings have been qualified for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, which means that major renovation and modernization will be cost prohibitive and economically unfeasible for the BIA to undertake. The historic buildings will be transferred to the All Indian Pueblo Council of New Mexico and removed from the BIA's inventory after the new school is built.

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: Polacca Day School, Polacca, Ariz.; Holbrook Dormitory, Holbrook, Ariz.; 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.