# Wingate Elementary School Dormitory 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 Wingate Elementary School Dormitory located in Ft. Wingate, 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 $19.5 million for the Wingate Elementary School Dormitory Replacement project that will replace century-old dormitory facilities with those that meet standards for health, safety, environmental quality, and accessibility, and that can accommodate a projected increase in student enrollment. The new facilities will house approximately 526 out of a projected enrollment of 831 students in grades K-8 from the Navajo reservation.

The new facilities will greatly enhance the quality of life for those students who must live away from home during the school year. The present dormitory facility, which currently serves 464 out of 698 students, is being replaced because its poor physical condition poses serious health risks to students, visitors, and faculty.Annual inspections of Wingate Elementary School facilities have detected various amounts of asbestos, radon, lead-based paint, and PCB.In addition, poor air quality exists due to the absence of air handling units to improve circulation and ventilation, electrical/mechanical systems are overloaded, and sanitary waste systems are deteriorating.

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.; Santa Fe Indian School, Santa Fe, 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.

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