Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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WASHINGTON – The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, or CARES Act, signed into law by President Trump on Friday, provides critical relief for Indian Country to address the COVID-19 pandemic, including over $500 million in direct appropriations to Indian Affairs and an unprecedented $8 billion for Tribes.

The $8 billion will be allocated to Tribal governments with eligible expenses through the Department of the Treasury, in consultation with the Department of the Interior and Tribal governments. These consultations will help ensure that the funds will be allocated effectively to Tribes most in need of critical aid.

“The CARES Act provides a critical infusion of supplemental funding for Tribal Communities, as we rapidly respond to the COVID-19 pandemic,” **said Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Tara Sweeney**. “Coupled with the nearly a half billion dollars in direct appropriations to Indian Affairs, the historic $8 billion tribal set-aside will provide urgent financial assistance. I want to thank President Trump as well as U.S. Senators Murkowski, Sullivan, Daines, McSally and Congressman Tom Cole for their collective efforts to include American Indians and Alaskan Natives in this historic bill.”

“Arizona’s tribal communities rely heavily on the industries hardest hit by the fallout created by the COVID-19 outbreak, including tourism and hospitality,” **said Senator Martha McSally (R-AZ)**. “Our tribes are already feeling significant strain. This legislation provides immediate cash relief and strong assistance to tribal communities impacted by this so workers and families can pay their bills. I will continue to work with the Administration to ensure this relief is administered quickly, efficiently and in a manner that works best for tribal communities.”

“As the Coronavirus pandemic impacts millions of Americans across the country, we cannot ignore one of our most vulnerable populations, Native Americans,” **said Senator Steve Daines (R-MT)**. “I thank President Trump for signing the Coronavirus economic recovery package into law which includes my request of strong funding for our tribal communities. I look forward to getting Indian country the resources they need during this global pandemic.”

The CARES Act provides $453 million for essential services to help prepare for and respond to the pandemic, ensure continuation of government operations, and aid individual Native Americans. The legislation provides funding needed to support assistance to individuals facing loss of income, ensure law enforcement and detention center employees have necessary personal protective equipment, and implement required deep cleaning of facilities or quarantines as needed. The CARES Act also provides specific set-asides for health, housing and nutrition assistance programs that will be critical to supporting Indian Country during this time.

The legislation also provides $69 million for education-related needs, including salaries, equipment, online curriculum development and other costs. To supplement the funds directly appropriated to Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), the CARES Act also provides support through the Education Stabilization Fund. In consultation with the Secretary of the Interior, the legislation directs the

Secretary of Education to allocate $153.75 million to Interior for programs operated or funded by BIE.

The CARE Act’s historic funding will provide urgent financial assistance to Tribal communities, as the Department of the Interior works to combat the COVID-19 pandemic in Indian Country. This landmark set-aside is larger than the Cobell Settlement.

The Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs advises the Secretary of the Interior on Indian Affairs policy issues, communicates policy to and oversees the programs of the BIA and the BIE, provides leadership in consultations with tribes and serves as the DOI official for intra- and inter- departmental coordination and on Indian matters.

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