Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Funding Helps Advance President Obama's Commitment to Improve Indian Education

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Kevin K. Washburn today issued the following statement regarding the $40 million in additional Bureau of Indian Education (BIE)-related funding in the recently enacted Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2015.

"It's heartening that Congress and the Obama Administration are working together to ensure American Indian students attending BIE-funded schools receive a world-class education delivered by tribal nations," said Assistant Secretary Washburn. "The Consolidated Appropriations Act takes a step in the right direction by addressing critical educational needs identified in the BIE Blueprint for Reform developed by the White House Council on Native American Affairs."

"This additional funding will help us to implement reforms, ensure tribal communities receive sufficient funding to operate their schools, and enable us to begin the longer process of replacing many of our dilapidated schools," added Bureau of Indian Education Director Charles "Monty" Roessel. "We have much work to do, but we are more determined than ever to work with Congress and tribal communities to reach our shared goal of improving educational outcomes for American Indian children."

The Consolidated Appropriations Act includes an additional $19,211,000 for school replacement over fiscal year 2014 funding levels. The school replacement funding completes the requirements for the school construction project started in fiscal year 2014 and covers design costs for the final two schools on the 2004 priority list. The agreement also includes an increase of $14,142,000 for Tribal Grant Support Costs for tribally controlled schools, $2,000,000 for the development and operation of tribal departments of education, and an increase of $1.7 million for Science Post Graduate Scholarships.

Under an initiative of the White House Council on Native American Affairs, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell, who chairs the Council, and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, after consultation with tribal leaders, issued a Blueprint for Reform in June 2014 to redesign the BIE. Building on the Blueprint's recommendations, Jewell issued a Secretarial Order to begin restructuring BIE from solely a provider of education to a capacity-builder and education service-provider to tribes. The goal of this transformation is to give tribes the ability themselves to provide an academically rigorous and culturally appropriate education to their students, according to their needs.

The Blueprint also made several recommendations regarding the BIE's budget, including that Interior invest in the school system's infrastructure, including funding to support new school construction, and align its budget to support tribal self-determination by requesting and increasing tribal grant and Tribal Grant Support Costs for tribally controlled grant schools.

The BIE oversees 183 elementary and secondary schools, located on 64 reservations in 23 states,

serving more than 48,000 students. Of these, 59 are BIE-operated and 124 are tribally operated under Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act contracts or Tribally Controlled Schools Act grants. BIE also funds or operates off-reservation boarding schools and peripheral dormitories near reservations for students attending public schools.