Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – President Bush has proposed a $2.2 billion budget for the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Fiscal Year 2002 that includes an increase of $65.9 million over the FY2001 appropriation. The increase will strengthen the commitment to replace, maintain and operate Indian schools, reform trust management, and ensure public safety in Indian Country. In addition, the request calls for increases in spending on Indian water and land claims settlements. "This request reflects the Bush administration's determination to protect the rights of American Indian and Alaska Native citizens," said James McDivitt, Acting Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs.

The BIA, which has the major responsibility for Indian matters within the U.S. Department of the Interior, carries out the Federal trust responsibility for and provides services to approximately 1.4 million American Indians and Alaska Natives who are members of 561 federally recognized Tribes in the 48 contiguous United States and Alaska. The President's FY2002 budget emphasizes areas of priority in Indian Country, including quality education within structurally sound and adequately equipped and maintained school facilities, continued improvement of trust management services, and implementation of recently authorized Indian lands and water rights settlements.

The Federal government is the sole funding source for two school systems: the Department of Defense schools for military dependents, and 185 elementary and secondary schools operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs for the education of American Indian children on reservations throughout the U.S. Over several decades, BIA schools have suffered from neglect and disrepair, which has had a direct impact on student learning and safety.

The FY2002 request for BIA School Construction is $292.5 million, an increase of $162,000 over the FY2001 enacted level. The construction budget includes $122.8 million for replacement facilities for six schools: Polacca Day School, Polacca, Ariz.; Holbrook Dormitory, Holbrook, Ariz.; Wingate Elementary School Dormitory, Ft. Wingate, N.M.; Santa Fe Indian School, Santa Fe, N.M.; Ojibwa Indian School, Belcourt, N.D.; and Paschal Sherman Indian School, Omak, Wash. The request also provides $5.0 million for advance planning and design of future replacement schools.

In addition to replacement school construction, the FY2002 budget request includes $161.6 million to address critical health and safety concerns at existing education facilities. The request, an increase of $13.6 million over 2001, will fund maintenance and repair projects to reduce the backlog of needed repairs to BIA school buildings. "This is one of Secretary Norton's highest priorities and a positive step in the right direction to bring the BIA school system into the 21st century. Indian children deserve, as do all children, to be educated in safe and healthy learning environments," said Acting Assistant Secretary James McDivitt.

The FY2002 School Operations budget supports the President's commitment to "leave no child behind" by providing quality educational opportunities for American Indians and Alaska Natives from early childhood through adulthood. The request for School Operations, which funds operations at BIA schools and dormitories, is $504.0 million, including a program increase of $9.1 million over FY2001. The increase will ensure that BIA schools maintain accreditation and have access to computers and other

critical learning tools. The request also provides a $1.0 million increase for operating grants to 25 tribally controlled community colleges.

As part of the Department's ongoing Trust Management Improvement project, the BIA is working with the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians to reform current trust systems, policies, practices and procedures. To ensure trust management improvements are sustained, the FY2002 budget request includes $118.4 million for several BIA trust services programs and related efforts, an increase of $14.1 million over FY2001. Of the increase, $12.0 million is a program increase for BIA real estate services and appraisals, probate functions, land titles and records offices, tribal courts, background security checks for BIA employees and contractors, management support for national resources and trust land revenues, and information resource management and trust records security.

To meet Federal requirements for recently authorized settlements resolving longstanding claims to water and lands in California, Colorado, Michigan, New Mexico and Utah, the FY2002 budget request of $60.9 million includes an increase of $23.5 million to fund the Colorado Ute-Animas LaPlata settlement ($8.0 million), the Torres-Martinez settlement ($6.0 million), the Shivwitz Band settlement ($5.0 million) and the Santo Domingo Pueblo settlement ($2.0 million), and to complete the Federal commitment for tribal payments in the U.S. v Michigan Great Lakes fishing settlement consent decree ($6.3 million). The budget request also includes funding for the Ute Indian Rights Settlement ($24.7 million) and the Rocky Boy's Reservation Indian reserved water rights settlement ($7.95 million). Furthermore, additional funds have been requested to provide continued support for the BIA's Law Enforcement Program to improve public safety and justice in Indian Country. The FY2002 budget request of $160.7 million includes a $5.0 million increase for basic detention services, such as dispatchers and detention officers. The increase will assist Tribes with costs associated with the opening of new detention centers.

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