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Interior's Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Ada E. Deer said today the President's fiscal year 1995 budget request of $2.24 billion for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) continues the shift of resources from the BIA to Indian tribes and strengthens the foundation established last year by President Clinton and Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt to fulfill the federal Indian trust responsibility and the creation of a government-to-government partnership.

"By continuing to emphasize and enhance the shift of responsibilities and resources to the tribes, we are providing them with the capability and flexibility to set and implement their own goals and directly administer federal programs," Deer said.

"This budget includes a significant investment in Indian education with about one-third of BIA's Operation of Indian Programs (OIP) budget devoted to Indian education programs," she added.

The 1995 total budget authority request of $2.24 billion for the Bureau of Indian Affairs falls slightly under the $2.27 billion enacted for 1994. For current appropriations, the President's request is $1. 77 billion. The OIP appropriation is increased by $9.3 million over 1994, to $1.5 billion.

The request for Tribal Priority Allocations (TPA), the portion of BIA's budget where funding priorities for programs are determined by the tribes, totals $447.4 million, about 30 percent of BIA's operating budget. The proposed program increase of $8.8 million will be used for law enforcement, social services, agriculture, and other programs prioritized by the tribes at the local level. Self-governance grants of $56.1 million are included in the TPA request and will provide funds for about 30 tribes. Contract support funds are also increased by $4 million for a total of $95.8 million.

Funds for education of Indian children in BIA's 186 funded schools are increased by $15.8 million to $514.8 million. "Quality education is an essential component in reducing unemployment, increasing self-esteem, improving community life, and increasing economic opportunities on the reservations," Deer said.

The education budget proposes distributing Indian School Equalization Formula dollars, which support basic educational programs for children in grades K through 12, based on the previous year's enrollment. The increased funding includes two new schools -- Trenton in North Dakota and Sault Ste. Marie in Michigan -- for the 1995-96 school year. Johnson-O'Malley, a supplemental education program for Indian students in public schools, will be funded at the FY 1994 level of $24.4 million. Funding for the 22 tribally controlled community colleges is continued at $26.9 million.

A total of $170 million has been requested for legislated settlements to resolve long-standing tribal claims to water and lands that would be provided in a separate fund within the Indian Land and Water Rights Claims Settlements and Miscellaneous Payments to Indians appropriations. The fund will include payments for nine settlements as well as the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project and water rights negotiation and litigation studies. The request fully funds all anticipated FY 1995 requirements for implementing enacted settlements.

In human services, the BIA General Assistance program is funded at $105.6 million. The $5 million welfare reform planning grant program initiated in 1994 will not be continued in order to allow the Bureau to fund other priorities. Indian Child Welfare Act grants are funded at the 1994 level.

The President's budget includes $191 million available in contract authority for Indian road construction which is funded out of the Department of Transportation Federal Highway Trust Fund. BIA's road maintenance funds are requested in the amount of $30 million.

In natural resources, $4.5 million is included to support the President's forest plan, $3 million for Jobs in the Woods ecosystem restoration projects, and $1.5 million to harvest the identified allowable backlog of approved annual timber cuts on reservations.

The Bureau continues to make progress in improving management and accountability in various areas. The 1995 request includes an increase of $1 million for financial management, and a $1.7 million increase to continue development and implementation of the land records history and imaging system critical to identifying ownership of allotted Indian lands.

The 1995 budget request includes a $5.7 million reduction related to personnel streamlining and a $7.7 million reduction resulting from administrative savings. BIA proposes to consolidate two area offices in Oklahoma and streamline other central offices and area and agency offices to provide more effective and efficient service delivery.

BIA will continue its funding for the repair of high risk dams on Indian reservations. A proposed budget of $18 million will include corrective action to be completed on Black Rock Dam in New Mexico and Crow Creek Dam in South Dakota.

The 1995 request for construction includes $6.9 million to complete the construction of the Sac and Fox juvenile detention center in Oklahoma. Education construction programs total $43 million, a reduction of $31.3 million from 1994, including a reduction in funding for one-time 1994 new school construction projects and a reduction in facilities improvement and repair. Construction will continue on seven previously funded schools, and the Bureau will have sufficient unobligated funds to complete facility improvement and repair projects on schools and law enforcement facilities.