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Interior's Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Eddie F. Brown said today the President's fiscal year 1991 budget request of $1.7 billion for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) will reverse a decade-long trend of reducing resources available to carry out the Bureau's responsibilities to the Indian people of this country.

While the total FY 1991 budget request for direct federal appropriations and permanent appropriations and trust funds is $186 million less than the current 1990 estimate, the main operating account for BIA -- Operation of Indian Programs -- shows an increase of over $30 million on direct program impact.

"Over the past 20 years, the service population of the BIA has doubled, while funding for the main operating account has remained essentially the same. This budget increase in the Operation of Indian Programs is reflected in the areas of education, drug abuse prevention and law enforcement programs, and self-determination services. The budget request also recognizes long-standing issues of internal control problems, and increases funding for programs carried out at the agency level either directly by the Bureau or through contracts with tribes and tribal organizations," Brown said.

He pointed out that the $186 million difference in the FY 1991 request and 1990 estimate reflects one-time costs in FY 1990, particularly the $54 million conversion of tribal contracts to calendar year funding, and Indian water and land settlements of $140 million.

The increases in the Operation of Indian Programs is reflected in:

--Education - increase of more than $16 million for school operations;

--Tribal Services - a net increase of $12 million;

--Trust Responsibilities and Natural Resources Development - a net increase of more than $10 million to improve trust property and financial assets held in trust for Indian tribes and individuals; and

--General Administration - An increase of $3 million to address internal controls issues and education program management.

Brown said the requested increases in education will fund the second increment of a phased increase in salaries for teachers and counselors in Bureau schools to better enable the Bureau to effectively compete for the recruitment and retention of skilled professions. The budget retains the FY 1990 Congressional increase for the Gifted and Talented program for a total resource level of $3.6 million. $1 million is requested to provide training in areas such as effective school management, leadership skills, methods for fostering parental involvement in the education of their children, and teaching techniques which have proven successful in raising the achievement of Indian children. The Bureau will also initiate a demonstration program at 10 schools using the nationally recognized 'Parents as Teachers' program emphasizing early childhood education and enhance parental and community involvement in the educational process. A $20 million request to cover the administrative costs of tribal contractors and grantees who operate bureau-funded schools represents a $6 million increase.

In Tribal Services, a program of technical assistance grants to tribes as authorized by the self-determination amendments is proposed to be funded at a level of $4.4 million. This amount includes continuation of the small tribe core management grant program. A $3.5 million increased request will staff and operate emergency shelters constructed under the authority of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act; a $2 million increased request will expand child protection efforts on Indian reservations; and $4 million will support enhanced law enforcement efforts bureau-wide.

In the area of Trust Responsibilities, an increase of $2.5 million is requested to clean up hazardous waste sites, particularly at three reservation sites -- Spokane in Washington state, Cherokee in Oklahoma, and Hoopa Valley in California; an increase of $2.3 million to improve operations of the land title and records offices; an increase of $1 million to address the large backlog of Indian estates awaiting probate action; and $2.8 million for financial trust services. The latter will support additional audits by third parties of funds held in trust by BIA, and will support needed organizational improvements.

In Natural Resources Development, $2 million is requested to eradicate noxious weeds on agricultural and range lands and $1 million is proposed to continue prairie dog control programs. The forest development program will be expanded as the budget request rises to a total level of $10.2 million with the increase of $2 million. These funds will continue the reforestation backlog reduction effort and provide silviculture treatment for those lands previously reforested, and speed forest management inventories and plans allowing BIA to address the needs of additional forested lands which have been acquired by tribes.

Increases requested in the General Administration area includes $1 million to establish an office of audit and evaluation charged with conducting programmatic and financial reviews, working with the Office of the Inspector General and the General Accounting Office in audits conducted by these organizations; and ensuring necessary corrective actions institutionalized within the Bureau. $2.3 million is requested for the Office of Data Systems to replace outdated automatic data 3 processing equipment and to improve services to the field. An increased request of $1 million will expand the participation of volunteers in the Bureau-funded education system, develop research instruments for the conduct of longitudinal studies on student progress, and support monitoring and evaluation teams who will conduct on-site, in-depth reviews of 45 Bureau-funded schools annually. An increase of $200,000 will fund a consolidated training program to improve the presence of women and minorities in the management levels of BIA.

The major decreases in the FY 1991 request includes a $3.1 million reduction in the Johnson-O'Malley Education Assistance programs which provides funds for supplementary programs for students enrolled in public schools. "Our first priority for improving educational attainment of Indian children is to strengthen those schools funded by the Bureau," Assistant secretary Brown said.

A net reduction of $4.8 million is proposed for Wildlife and Parks -- $2.3 million in rights protection implementation in Western Washington: $300,000 in the Columbia River fisheries programs: and $837,000 in funding for the Voight case fisheries.