Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has asked Congress to appropriate $928.7 million for its 1985 fiscal year programs and projects. This is an increase of $21 million over the 1984 appropriations.

The BIA will receive an additional $100 million for reservation road construction, through the Department of Transportation, under provisions of the Highway Improvement Act of 1982.

The budget also proposes FY 1984 supplemental including $17.0 million for the Ak-Chin Irrigation Project in Arizona and $7.4 million for welfare grants (as a transfer from the construction account).

Kenneth L. Smith, Interior Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, said that the budget request reflects a continued effort on the part of the Reagan Administration to support Indian self-determination and tribal self-government. Smith noted that the Administration's Indian policy statement issued in January, 1983 called for the strengthening of tribal governments and special efforts to develop reservation economies.

The 1985 budget requests increases for two tribal development initiatives started in 1983. A program to help small tribes acquire basic management skills needed to administer tribal and federal programs has been increased from $3.5 million in 1984 to $5 million in 1985.

A "seed-money" program to encourage new reservation enterprises, requiring 75 percent of the total funding to come from non-federal sources, will increase from $5 million in 1984 to $10 million in 1985.

The budget request also includes $16.8 million for. Self-determination grants to tribes to help them expand their abilities to govern their own affairs on the reservations.

The importance of Indian education continues to be stressed with $273.4 million requested for the operation of Indian schools, assistance to Indian students in public schools, and adult and college-level programs. This total includes $29.5 million for assistance to Indian college students; $11.1 million for tribally controlled community colleges, and $9.1 million for three federally-operated post-secondary schools.

The 1985 request also includes $212.6 million requested for Indian services; $67 million for economic development and employment programs; $96.9 million for natural resources development; $47.7 million for trust responsibilities; $90.2 million for facilities management; $67.4 million for general administration and $73.3 million for construction projects.