Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152
For Immediate Release: February 1, 2010
Print PDF

WASHINGTON, D.C. – President Obama's proposed $2.6 billion budget request for Indian Affairs is a fiscally responsible plan that focuses strategic investments to empower tribal nations. Overall, the proposed budget is a net decrease of $3.6 million from the 2010 enacted level, when taking into account the elimination of the one-time increase in 2010 to forward fund the tribal colleges. The budget targets more than $70 million in program increases to strengthen tribal management of federally-funded programs and to enhance energy, education and public safety programs that will bring jobs to Indian Country. These programs are central to the mission of Indian Affairs and major priorities identified by Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs Larry Echo Hawk.

"The Indian Affairs Fiscal Year 2011 budget request supports the Administration's goals for developing the nation's energy resources and addressing climate change, while making targeted investments in Indian Country that support tribal self-determination, improve education, protect tribal communities and fulfill the federal trust responsibility to federally recognized tribes and individual American Indians and Alaska Natives," Assistant Secretary Echo Hawk said.

The request will fund three major Interior initiatives – **Empowering Tribal Nations**, the **New Energy Frontier and Climate Change Adaptation** – to support self-determination for the 564 federally recognized tribes, carry out the federal trust responsibility for tribal and individual Indian trust beneficiaries, and meet the Administration's goals of developing domestic energy resources, understanding the effects of climate change and adding jobs to the nation's economy.

The FY 2011 budget request for the Empowering Tribal Nations Initiative is a multi-faceted effort that will advance DOI's nation-to-nation relationships with the tribes, improve Indian education, protect Indian communities and reform trust land management, in support of greater tribal self-determination. The initiative builds on the historic White House Tribal Nations Conference in 2009 and the President's commitment to improving quality-of-life conditions throughout Indian Country. The request for the Empowering Tribal Nations Initiative includes:

- Program increases of $29.9 million for the **Advancing Nation-to-Nation Relationships** component to help tribes achieve the Administration's vision of tribal self-determination. The increases include $21.5 million to strengthen tribal management of federal programs, $1.0 million to strengthen self-determination contract oversight, $2.0 million for additional social workers to address high unemployment and substance abuse in tribal communities, $3.0 million to support small tribes (those with populations under 1,700) in strengthening their government operations, $500,000 to support the development of a performance data management system that will help tribes meet annual audit and reporting requirements, and $450,000 to improve acquisition management. The increase also includes $1.5 million for the final payment that fulfills the Department's portion of the Puget Sound Regional Shellfish Settlement (Pub. L. 109-479).
- An additional $20.0 million in program funding over the 2010 enacted level for the **Protecting Indian Country** component. The funding supports Indian Affairs' trust obligations to uphold tribal sovereignty in the area of public safety and it strengthens collateral efforts with the U.S. Department of Justice to fight crime in tribal communities. The increase includes $19.0 million to

fund additional law enforcement personnel within the Justice Department dedicated to investigating drug, gang and public corruption crimes on reservations and those affecting tribal gaming enterprises in Indian Country. An additional $1.0 million will fund operations and maintenance for new detention facilities built with Justice Department grants.

- Program increases of $9.1 million for the **Improving Trust Land Management** component to assist tribes in the management, development and protection of Indian trust lands and natural resources. The increases, which are part of the FY 2011 budget request of $318.3 million for continuing trust reform, include $1.9 million for enhanced probate management and oversight, $1.2 million for development efforts in the former Bennett Freeze area of the Navajo Nation reservation in northeastern Arizona, $659,000 for cadastral surveys on the Nez Perce Indian reservation in Idaho per the Nez Perce/Snake River Water Rights Act of 2004 (Pub. L. 108-477), $1.5 million for tribal water management and water rights programs, and $3.8 million for repairs and risk mitigation on high-risk and significant hazard dams.
- Increases of $8.9 million for the **Advancing Indian Education** component that enhances the Department's ongoing commitment to improving Indian education for students in BIE-funded elementary and secondary schools and tribal colleges and universities. The increase includes $3.9 million to address safety and security issues identified by the Department's Inspector General in the past year, $2.0 million to fund 13 full-time environmental professionals to conduct environmental audits at BIE schools and $3.0 million to cover tribal administrative and indirect costs at 124 tribally controlled schools and residential facilities.

The FY 2011 budget request for Operation of Indian Programs is $2.4 billion, which is $58.7 million or 2.5 percent above the 2010 enacted level. The request also includes $115.7 million for Construction, a program reduction of $51.6 million from the 2010 level.

The request takes into consideration the $285.0 million provided to Indian Affairs for school and detention center construction activities and the $225.0 million provided to the Justice Department for detention center construction under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, which allowed the completion of a number of high priority projects.

Included in the $115.7 million request is $52.9 million for Education Construction, $11.4 million for Public Safety and Justice Construction, $42.2 million for Resource Management Construction, which includes an increase of $3.8 million for the Safety of Dams program, and $9.3 million for Other Program Construction. The request funds the Dennehotso Replacement School Phase II Project at the Dennehotso Boarding School located near Chinle, Ariz., on the Navajo Nation reservation, and the start of the Riverside Academic School Replacement Phase I Project for the Riverside Indian School located in Riverside, Okla.

The request also reflects a proposed transfer of $57.3 million in facilities operations and maintenance funding from the Construction account to the Operations of Indian Programs account. By consolidating all operations and maintenance funds in the Operations account, the transfer will increase transparency of those funds thereby improving the management of the maintenance and construction programs.

The budget proposes a net increase of $28.0 million in Tribal Priority Allocations, which is 3.4 percent above the 2010 enacted level. Collectively, the request includes program increases of $21.5 million for contract support and the Indian Self-Determination Fund, $3.0 million for Small and Needy Tribes, $2.0 million for additional social workers, $1.2 million to develop the former Bennett Freeze area and $1.5 million for energy development on the Fort Berthold reservation.

The 2011 budget request for the Department's New Energy Frontier Initiative contains an increase of $2.5 million for Indian Affairs to assist those tribes whose lands hold active and potential energy resources with their exploration and development. The increase includes $1.0 million for grants to tribes to evaluate and develop renewable energy resources on their trust lands and $1.0 million for conventional energy development on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation in North Dakota, the home of the Three Affiliated Tribes, under which sits the Bakken Basin, one of the most prolific gas and oil producing geographic areas in the U.S. The increase also includes $500,000 to support the "one-stop shop" established by the Department and the tribe last year to bring greater accountability and efficiency to energy development on the reservation.

The FY 2011 budget request for the Climate Change Adaptation Initiative reflects the essential role Indian Affairs will play in the Department's response to the impacts of climate change given its special role in protecting tribal trust resources and Alaska Native subsistence harvests. The request includes $200,000 to support Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC) to improve understanding of and address the impacts of climate change on Indian lands.

The FY 2011 budget request for **Resolving Land and Water Claims** is $46.5 million. It includes $15.5 million, the fifth of seven payments, for the Nez Perce/Snake River Water Rights Settlement; $6.5 million for the final year of funding for the Puget Sound Regional Shellfish Settlement and $5.5 million for the second and last payment for the Soboba Band of Luiseño Indian Water Settlement Act. The request also includes funds authorized by the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 of $12.0 million, the second of five payments, for the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Reservation Water Settlement and $6.0 million for the second payment to the Navajo Nation Water Resources Development Trust Fund.

In light of the proposed *Cobell v. Salazar* settlement agreement, which is awaiting Congressional action and final approval by the U.S. District Court, and the anticipated impact of the new $2 billion Trust Land Consolidation Fund, the budget includes $1.0 million for the current Indian Land Consolidation Program This is a reduction of $2.0 million from the 2010 level, but will allow for maintaining staff to assist beneficiaries with estate planning, family trust regulations, educational efforts and consolidation agreements.

Indian Affairs is participating in a Department-wide effort to produce savings and efficiencies and to improve government operations by implementing proposals submitted by federal employees to the President's SAVE Award program in the areas of travel, information technology and strategic sourcing. Indian Affairs' share of the projected $62.0 million in savings under this initiative includes $271,000 in reduced travel and relocation expenditures, $2.3 million from improved effectiveness and efficiencies in IT and $2.7 million by expanding the use of strategic sourcing. In addition, Indian Affairs is absorbing all of its employee pay and benefits cost increase this year, which totals over $19.4 million.

Other decreases reflected in the FY 2011 budget request are $1.1 million for Education Program Management to fund other priorities within the education program and $7.5 million for probate since the backlog has been eliminated.