Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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WASHINGTON – President Bush has proposed a $2.2 billion budget for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) for Fiscal Year 2008. The 2008 request is $7.0 million above the President's 2007 budget request and $1.0 million below the 2007 continuing resolution. The budget includes two initiatives to ensure that future generations of Native Americans have safe and secure communities to call home and that Indian children attending BIE schools can fulfill their potential through education. The initiatives include new investments totaling $31.0 million to address the challenges to law enforcement and education in Indian communities.

"Raising the level of public safety in tribal communities, particularly those dealing with the devastating effects of methamphetamine use, and improving the performance of our schools is the focus of the President's 2008 budget request for Indian Affairs," said Interior Associate Deputy Secretary James E. Cason. "The request addresses priorities identified by tribal leaders and supports the No Child Left Behind Act goals of improving Indian student academic achievement." Tribal leaders attest that the spread of methamphetamine within Indian Country has reached a crisis level in many Indian communities.

Tribal leaders across the nation have cited methamphetamine crime as the number one public safety problem on their reservations. The President's 2008 budget request for the BIA's Office of Justice Services provides $16.0 million for the Safe Indian Communities Initiative. The initiative's focus is to assist tribes address drug and other law enforcement issues in Indian Country by providing $5.0 million for additional law enforcement officers, $5.0 million to increase staffing levels at Indian detention facilities and for training detention officers, and $6.0 million for specialized drug enforcement training for new and existing officers as well as public awareness campaigns for tribal communities on the dangers of methamphetamine.

The 2008 budget request for BIE programs is $660.5 million. To raise the level of student performance in BIE-funded schools and to increase the number of schools achieving Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act, the request includes increases totaling $15.0 million for the Improving Indian Education Initiative. The request will support targeted intensive educational assistance to BIE-funded schools that have yet to achieve their AYP goals and proposes additional funding for student transportation, education program management and information technology.

Included in the request is $5.3 million to fund a new program element, Education Program Enhancements, to utilize resources for specific initiatives, projects, and new activities associated with targeted improvements to educational instruction and learning for BIE school students; an increase of $4.25 million for student transportation to offset higher fuel costs and to ensure that BIE school vehicles meet national and state safety standards; an increase of $3.6 million for Education Program Management to establish positions for specialists dedicated to the administration and management of data, contracts and school finances; and an increase of $1.85 million to fund the Native American Student Information System, an information management tool that will enable the BIE to better monitor school progress and analyze trends.

The Fiscal Year 2008 budget request for Construction is $197.6 million.

The 2008 budget request for school construction and repair is $139.8 million which includes $14.8 million to fully fund the replacement of the Circle of Life Survival School, a tribally administered K-12 day school on the White Earth Indian Reservation in Minnesota, and the Keams Canyon Elementary School, a BIE-administered K-6 day school on the Hopi Reservation in Arizona. In addition, $22.6 million is requested to complete the replacement of structures at the Standing Rock Community School, a tribally administered K-12 day school on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in North Dakota, and to fully fund the replacement of dormitories at Riverside Indian School, an off-reservation BIE boarding school for grades four through 12 located in Anadarko, Okla.

The Education Construction budget request also includes $30.2 million for Major Facilities Improvement and Repair (FI&R) projects, $19.9 million for Minor FI&R projects, $50.7 million for annual maintenance, and $1.6 million for employee housing.

The 2008 budget request for Indian Land and Water Claims Settlements is $34.1 million of which $9.4 million is for two new settlements, including $7.0 million for the initial payment to the Puget Sound Regional Shellfish Settlement Trust Fund and $2.4 million for the initial payment towards the Pueblo of Isleta Settlement of 2006. Also requested is $16.2 million for the Snake River Water Rights settlement. The 2008 budget includes $10.7 million in reductions for two settlements completed in 2007: the Cherokee, Choctaw and Chickasaw settlement and the Quinault Indian Nation settlement.

The BIA request includes an increase of $41.3 million to fully cover fixed costs in Indian Affairs programs.

The BIA Fiscal Year 2008 budget request reflects the President’s commitment to fiscal discipline. The budget supports core mission program priorities and proposes reductions in programs which lack performance accountability or duplicate other Federal or State programs. This budget includes reductions for the Housing Improvement Program ($23.4 million), Rights Protection Programs ($3.8 million), Tribal Education Support Programs ($12.7 million), Contract Support ($2.0 million), Irrigation Operation and Maintenance ($1.5 million), and Environmental Quality Projects, Real Estate Services Projects and Forestry Projects ($4.0 million).