Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152
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WASHINGTON – President Bush has proposed a $2.3 billion budget for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) for Fiscal Year 2005 that will ensure the continuation of the Interior Department's Indian trust reorganization and management improvement efforts, maintain the commitment to implementing the No Child Left Behind Act in BIA-funded schools, continue school replacement construction projects, and support law enforcement. The request also includes payments for Indian water and land claims settlements.

"The President has proposed a budget that will ensure trust management continues to improve, that Indian students will learn in safe and healthy schools, and that law enforcement services will improve for tribal communities," said David W. Anderson, Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs.

The Fiscal Year 2005 budget request provides $291.8 million, an increase of $47.4 million over the Fiscal Year 2004 enacted level, to continue the Department's effort to reform and improve its management of trust resources and assets of the Federally recognized tribes and individual Indians. The request includes $29.1 million to continue the modernization of the BIA's information technology systems and security to support trust and non-trust programs.

Increases to support ongoing reform and reorganization of Indian trust programs include $4.0 million to quicken the pace at which current probate cases are resolved and $5.5 million for additional trust management and oversight positions at the local level. Other 2005 requests which will enhance trust management are a $2.0 million increase for training to develop a workforce geared toward the unique execution of trust operations across the nation and $1.1 million to establish a permanent Office of Tribal Consultation which will promote greater Federal consultation with tribes on issues effecting trust reform.

The Indian Land Consolidation Program will expand into a nationwide effort to reduce the fractionation of individual Indian land ownership interests in 2004. The budget for the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST) includes an unprecedented $75 million for the program, reflecting a $53.3 million increase in funding. The BIA will receive those funds for the ongoing effort to acquire small, fractionated ownership shares in allotted Indian lands from willing sellers. The BIA has implemented the land consolidation effort as a pilot program in four states on seven reservations. As of December 31, 2003, program funds purchased 68,938 individual interests representing 42,075 acres.

As part of the President's Healthy Forests Initiative, the Fiscal Year 2005 budget request for BIA also includes a program increase of $1.0 million to improve the management of Indian forests. The request will increase the number of reservations covered by forest management plans. Such plans optimize benefits and address use conflicts on reservations, as well as improve the utilization of trust resources. This request also will complement fuels treatment efforts by DOI's wildland fire program.

In January 2002, the President signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The Fiscal Year 2005 budget request seeks $522.4 million for elementary and secondary school operations to maintain the President's commitment to improving student achievement in BIA schools. It also includes an

increase of $500,000 to expand FOCUS to five new sites. FOCUS is a program that provides targeted assistance to schools to raise their level of instruction and improve student learning.

The budget request also includes $229.1 million for school replacement construction and repair, including $68.5 million to replace the five remaining schools and dormitories on the education facilities construction priority-ranking list. They are the Bread Springs Day School, Gallup, N.M.; Ojo Encino Day School, Cuba, N.M.; Beclabito Day School, Shiprock, N.M.; Leupp Boarding School, Winslow, Ariz.; and Chemawa Indian School, Salem, Ore. The school construction budget also includes $9.9 million, an increase of $4.0 million over Fiscal Year 2004, for the Tribal School Construction Demonstration Program, which provides incentives to tribes to match Federal funds to build replacement schools.

Together with funding provided in previous appropriations, the 2005 budget will significantly improve the condition of BIA schools, which serve almost 48,000 Indian students living in 23 states. In School Year 2002-2003, the BIA directly operated one-third of its schools and the remaining two-thirds were tribally-operated under BIA contracts or grants.

For post-secondary education, the Fiscal Year 2005 budget request seeks $43.4 million, and supports two existing tribally-controlled colleges that have recently met statutory requirements for BIA support: the Tohono O'odham Community College in Arizona and the Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College in Michigan. The budget request also includes $250,000 for a student loan repayment program, a pilot project specifically targeted to college graduates who agree to a term of employment with the BIA. This program will add to the Bureau's ability to recruit new employees.

Furthermore, funding is requested to continue support for the BIA's Law Enforcement Program to improve public safety and justice in Indian Country. The Fiscal Year 2005 budget request seeks $1.4 million for BIA operations at the Tohono O'odham Nation's reservation border in Arizona, and an increase of $7.8 million for the operation of eight new detention centers to meet current detention standards and alleviate conditions such as severe overcrowding and the mixing of juvenile and adult detainees. The Department's $29.1 million IT increase includes $1.5 million for the BIA share of an Incident Management and Analysis Reporting System to be used by all Interior Department law enforcement programs.

The Fiscal Year 2005 budget request also seeks $34.8 million to meet Federal requirements for authorized settlements resolving tribal land and water claims. The request includes funding for two new settlements: $14.0 million for Zuni Pueblo water claims in N.M. and $1.75 million for Seneca Nation land claims at Cuba Lake in New York. The request also includes the second $10.0 million payment for the Cherokee, Choctaw and Chickasaw settlement in Oklahoma, and $8.0 million for the Colorado Ute/Animas La Plata settlement. The budget reflects a net decrease of $25.4 million from the Fiscal Year 2004 funding level due primarily to the completion of the Santo Domingo and Ute Indian settlements in 2004.

The Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs has responsibility for fulfilling the Department's trust responsibilities to individual and tribal trust beneficiaries, as well as promoting tribal self-determination, education and economic development for the nation's 562 Federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and their members. The Assistant Secretary also oversees the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), which is responsible for providing services to approximately 1.8 million individual American Indians and Alaska Natives from the Federally recognized tribes.