Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – The FY2003 request for the Bureau of Indian Affairs is $2.3 billion, including $22.9 million for the legislative proposal to shift to the agencies the full cost of the CSRS pension system and the Federal employee health benefits program. Without the legislative proposal, the request is $2.2 billion, an increase of $22.9 million over the FY2002 level, for the BIA to carry out its responsibility for providing services to Federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes and individuals. (Funding totals discussed below exclude the legislative proposal.) Major highlights of the proposed budget include increased funding for trust programs, Tribal Priority Allocation and new school construction, as well as bringing accountability to BIA funded and operated schools.

“This budget emphasizes priorities that Indian Country cares about,” said Interior Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Neal A. McCaleb. “It sets the BIA on the road to becoming a more efficient service agency that effectively meets the needs of its stakeholders – the Tribes and Indian people.”

The FY2003 BIA budget request proposes an increase of $34.8 million for Indian trust-related programs. This includes increases for BIA’s tribal courts program ($4.0 million) and social services program ($2.1 million).

BIA trust services programs receive an increase of $15.8 million to focus on real property functions, such as land and title records administration, appraisals, and lease management and compliance. The request includes a $4.5 million increase for BIA natural resource programs on trust lands that generate revenue through activities such as mining, forestry and agriculture. Much of the increased funding will be contracted out to improve efficiency, with priority to tribal contracting or compacting to support Indian self-determination. In addition, the budget request for the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians includes a $48.8 million increase to further improve Indian trust management.

In January 2002, President Bush signed into law the “No Child Left Behind Act of 2001,” a landmark education bill that will help strengthen the 185 schools in the BIA school system. The FY2003 budget places new emphasis on improving academic performance at BIA schools and continues the 2002 initiative to eliminate the school maintenance and repair backlog.

The budget request provides increased funding for quality educational opportunities for American Indians from early childhood through adulthood. The request for BIA School Operations, which funds operations at BIA schools and dormitories, totals $522.8 million, an increase of $18.8 million over the FY2002 level.

The FY2003 budget request includes $11.9 million to offset costs inherent in the proposed BIA school privatization initiative, the centerpiece of the administration’s initiative to improve the performance of the lowest-performing schools of the 64 that are directly run by the BIA. Under this initiative, the BIA will provide increased funding to encourage Tribes to take on the management of their schools or enter into partnerships with private enterprise to manage the schools. The School Privatization Initiative reflects President Bush’s proposal to use competition to enhance the opportunities for American Indian children to succeed in learning.

The budget request includes a $3.0 million increase to expand BIA's FACE program to seven schools. FACE (Family and Child Education) enhances Indian education for both adults and children by involving parents more fully in the critical earliest stages of their children's education. BIA schools with the FACE program have been found to show significantly higher scores on standardized tests of reading and math skills.

One-fifth of the school buildings in the BIA school system are more than 50 years old and half are more than 30 years old. Many require significant major repairs or replacement to provide safe and nurturing learning environments. The FY2003 budget continues the commitment to BIA school replacement and repair by requesting $292.7 million for BIA School Construction, including $120.2 million to replace six schools: Santa Fe Indian School (Phase II), Santa Fe, N.M.; Kayenta Community School, Kayenta, Ariz.; Tiospa Zina Tribal School, Agency Village, S.D.; Wide Ruins Community School, Chambers, Ariz.; Low Mountain Boarding School, Chinle, Ariz.; and St. Francis Indian School, St. Francis, S.D. In addition, the FY2003 budget request provides $164.4 million for BIA Education Facilities Improvement and Repair to address critical health and safety concerns at existing education facilities. The request, an increase of $2.8 million over FY2002, will fund maintenance and repair projects to continue to reduce the backlog of needed repairs to BIA school buildings.

The FY2003 budget request includes $775.5 million, an increase of $23.4 million over FY2002, for Tribal Priority Allocations to meet the costs of Tribal government operations. TPA funds programs and services critical to improving quality of life and economic potential on reservations and supports the goals of Indian self-determination.

To meet Federal requirements for authorized settlements of land and water claims, the FY2003 budget request proposes $24.7 million for the Ute Indian Rights Settlement, $8.0 million for the Colorado Ute Settlement, and $3.1 million for the Santo Domingo Pueblo settlement. The request also includes funding to complete the Federal commitment for the Shivwits Band of the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah water rights settlement ($16.0 million) and for the Rocky Boy's Reservation Indian reserved water rights settlement ($5.0 million).

The BIA budget request also proposes increases of $3.0 million to operate new detention centers, $2.1 million for activities to support the administration's national energy plan and $500,000 to expand the BIA's Loan Guaranty Program by 10 percent to enhance economic development in Indian Country.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs has the major responsibility for Indian matters within the U.S. Department of the Interior. The Bureau carries out the Federal trust responsibility for and provides services to approximately 1.4 million American Indians and Alaska Natives who are members of 559 Federally recognized Tribes in the 48 contiguous United States and Alaska.