Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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(WASHINGTON) – With the stroke of a pen today, President George W. Bush signed into law the "No Child Left Behind Act of 2001," the historic education bill that for the first time will bring to BIA-funded schools the four pillars of his education reform plan: accountability and testing, flexibility and local control, funding for what works and expanded parental options for children attending failing schools.

"I applaud President Bush for his commitment to improving education in Indian Country," Interior Secretary Gale Norton said. "We will work closely with the Department of Education to bring more accountability to our schools and improve education for all students in Indian Country."

"President Bush and I agree that an Indian child who goes without a quality education is a dream that may never be fulfilled. We are committed to making the dreams of Indian children a reality," Secretary Norton said.

Highlights of the "No Child Left Behind Act of 2001" include:

- For the first time, Bureau funded schools will be eligible for funding under the "Reading First" initiative to establish reading programs for Indian children in grades K-3.
- Makes all BIA-operated schools eligible for competitive programs under the Act.

"Like their peers, Indian students deserve a good education and must have access to good schools," Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Neal A. McCaleb said. "By his action today, the president has assured Indian Country's parents that BIA funded schools will be held accountable for the quality and success of the education services they provide."

Title X, Part D, of the president's bill, the "Native American Education Improvement Act of 2001," deals specifically with bringing more accountability to BIA funded schools. Highlights include:

- Mandating that all BIA funded schools be accredited, or a candidate for accreditation, within 24 months from enactment of the Act.
- Calling for a report on establishing a tribal accreditation agency for BIA-funded schools.
- Increasing the funding amount schools can receive at the start of each school year.
- Consolidating all BIA personnel and support services that are "directly and substantially" involved in education within the Office of Indian Education Programs.
- Authorizing a demonstration project to integrate Federal education and related services provided to Indian students with streamlined reporting requirements.

The Act reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which authorizes Federal education programs and services administered by the U.S. Department of Education. Within Interior, the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Office of Indian Education Programs manages 185 elementary and secondary schools. The Bureau functions as a 51st state for the purpose of receiving Education Department program funds for BIA schools and students. Under Title X of the "No Child Left Behind Act" is Part D, the "Native American Education Improvement Act of 2001," which addresses BIA education programs and schools.