Schools, Trust Management, Law Enforcement Among Programs Seeing Major Increases

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The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has received $2.1 billion in funding for FY2001, a 15% increase over FY2000, the largest increase in several years. The BIA administers programs for and provides services to federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and individuals. BIA programs receiving significant increases include new school construction, trust fund management and law enforcement.

Assistant Secretary Kevin Gover expressed his appreciation to the President, Congress, tribes and Indian organizations for supporting BIA programs critical to Indian and Alaska Native people. "The BIA is now in a position to begin addressing long-standing problems of concern to Indian people, thanks to the support of President Clinton, Secretary Babbitt, Congress, and tribes and Indian organizations across the country. I also want to acknowledge the hard-working BIA employees who do their jobs despite limited budgets with grace and dedication."

The BIA School Construction program got its largest funding increase ever to $293 million, up 120% from the FY2000 level of $133.3 million. Most of the BIA's 185 schools, which serve over 50,000 Indian elementary and secondary students, need major repairs and new construction, at an estimated cost of over $2.4 billion dollars. "With this funding we can start to address the concerns of parents, teachers and tribal leaders over the condition of BIA-funded schools, and the welfare of their students," said Gover. "However, funding must remain significant if we are to meet the trust responsibility for education and complete the task of rebuilding our schools. Indian children deserve no less than healthy and safe learning environments."

Schools slated for replacement include Tuba City Boarding School and Second Mesa Day Schools in Arizona: Zia Day School, Baca Consolidated Community School and Wingate Elementary School in New Mexico; and Lummi Day School in Washington State. In addition, funding was increased from $67.8 million in FY2000 to $148.3 million in FY2001 to address a major backlog in BIA school maintenance and repair projects. Furthermore, the nation's 31 tribal colleges will receive $38.2 million in FY 2001, an 8% increase over their FY2000 enacted level of $35.3 million.

The BIA also received $104.5 million for trust management, a 44% increase over its FY2000 enacted level of $72.5 million. "These funds will allow the work on fixing the trust fund management system to continue," Gover said.

The BIA's law enforcement program was funded at $152.9 million, an 8% increase over its FY2000 enacted level of $141.1 million. These additional funds will be used to improve law. enforcement and public safety in Indian Country, including strengthening core law enforcement functions such as uniformed police, communications, basic detention services and detention officers. "With funds we will

continue to strengthen law enforcement capabilities in tribal communities throughout Indian Country. Our law-abiding citizens and men and women in uniform need to know that we are taking seriously their concerns about public safety. Our message is clear: Crime will not be tolerated in Indian Country," said Gover.

The BIA' s budgets were severely limited during the period that the Administration and Congress sought to balance the federal budget. Having reached that goal, the Congressional Budget Office is now projecting budget surpluses over the next several years. "We are grateful for the increase in the BIA budget for FY2001 and hope for continued support to fulfill the Nation's trust responsibility to American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes in the new century," said Gover.

More information on the FY2001 budget can be found on the BIA's website at www.doi.gov/bureau-indian-affairs.html or by calling the Office of Public Affairs at 202-208- 3710.