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The Department of the Interior today announced its opposition to legislation now pending in Congress (S. 381) which would provide for Federal subsidies to States to finance the costs of law enforcement on Indian reservations.

Assistant Secretary John A. Carver, Jr., pointed out, that since 1940 eleven States have taken action under authorizing Congressional legislation to assume criminal or civil jurisdiction or both over some or all of the Indian reservations within their borders. These actions were taken, he added, with Indian approval or without strenuous Indian opposition and without thought of Federal subsidy. At present, however, it appears that certain State legislatures are being influenced to adopt similar legislation by the prospect or possibility that Federal subsidies will be provided to finance law enforcement costs on the Indian reservations.

"We think," Mr. Carver said, "that this situation is unfortunate from several points of view. First, it presupposes that the Federal Government will subsidize all activities of a State or local government in this field--which is not necessarily true. Second, the prospect of Federal subsidies under legislation such as S. 381 might well influence some States to assume jurisdiction in Indian areas prematurely and at a time when such action would not be in the best interests of the Indians or of local law enforcement agencies. Third, the bill could also have the effect of setting aside the Indian people as a special racial group entitled to extraordinary financial treatment because of their racial status."

Mr. Carver also pointed out that the costs of S. 381 to the Federal Government 'may be much greater than originally contemplated since there is nothing in its provisions to prevent the States which have already taken jurisdiction over Indian reservations from applying for and receiving the Federal subsidy payments.

Ten States now have jurisdiction over some or all of the Indian reservations within their borders. These are California, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, Oregon, Washington and Wisconsin. Similar action was taken by the North Dakota legislature several years ago but this was subsequently invalidated by a court decision.

In other States a combination of Federal and tribal jurisdiction prevails on Indian reservation lands.