

**STATEMENT OF TARA SWEENEY
ASSISTANT SECRETARY – INDIAN AFFAIRS
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
“THE PRESIDENT’S FY 2020 BUDGET REQUEST
FOR INDIAN PROGRAMS”
May 8, 2019**

Good afternoon Chairman Hoeven, Vice Chairman Udall, and Members of the Committee, Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Department of the Interior (DOI) regarding the President’s Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2020.

The President’s 2020 budget for Indian Affairs is \$2.8 billion – this total includes funding for BIA, BIE and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs (AS-IA). As the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs, I oversee the program offices within the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), and additional programmatic functions within the immediate AS-IA Office. I also wanted to acknowledge that during the 2019 appropriation process, DOI requested and Congress approved the transfer of the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians from the Office of the Secretary to the Office of the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs. This re-alignment within the Department will enhance planning and coordination of policies and services related to Indian Country and I look forward to making this transition a smooth one.

Indian Affairs is the principal Executive Branch component entrusted to fulfill Federal trust and treaty responsibilities to the 573 federally recognized Indian Tribes. In doing so, our programs directly serve the nearly two million individual American Indians and Alaska Natives in the United States – including trust asset management, social service programs, and law enforcement services. Indian Affairs is a principal funding source for Tribes and tribal entities executing self-determination contracts and self-governance compacts under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act. Our programs are a core component of community development and social provision in Indian Country. We strive to implement our programs in a manner that respects tribal sovereignty and fosters strong government-to-government relations.

Our leadership at the Bureau of Indian Education works tirelessly to provide quality education to all native youth. The BIE manages a school system which includes 169 elementary and secondary schools and 14 dormitories. Our Indian education program delivers education services to 47,000 students across 23 States. Additionally, the BIE also operates two post-secondary schools and administers grants for 31 post-secondary institutions. Our BIE Director, and supporting staff, are all committed public servants dedicated to delivering the best education

possible, in a culturally relevant manner, to our tribal students.

One significant highlight of our 2020 budget is the separate requests submitted for BIA and BIE. This is the first time each bureau has had a separate budget submissions. Our rationale for doing so is to address the cumbersome processes by which simple, yet critical, operations are implemented within the BIE school system. Early in my tenure as the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs, my staff and I determined the BIE has not been sufficiently empowered to manage its own operation and maintenance functions. This is a key contributing factor to our native students experiencing subpar education and unacceptable school conditions. In many instances, simple procurement or service processes required direct action from every major component of Indian Affairs’ – the BIE, BIA, and the AS-IA Office. This budget separation will empower both the BIE and the BIA to more directly, and independently, focus on their respective core missions while avoiding redundancy and duplication.

I know many of these issues are familiar to the committee and the resulting operational difficulties have been identified many times by Congressional committees and the Government Accountability Office. To that end, I am committed to working with you, Chairman Hoeven and Vice-Chairman Udall, along with the rest of the Committee to advance our shared priorities for Indian Country, and to improve education and service delivery to our native students, tribal governments, and individual tribal citizens nationwide.

Bureau of Indian Education

The FY 2020 budget request for the Bureau of Indian Education programs within the Department totals \$936.3 million.

Operation of Indian Education Programs

The 2020 budget provides \$867.4 million for Operation of Indian Education Programs. This newly created account includes existing programs formerly in the Operation of Indian Programs BIE activity. In 2020, priority is given to programs that directly support classroom operations at BIE-funded elementary and secondary schools and post-secondary tribal colleges and universities, consistent with BIE’s Strategic Direction.

Elementary and Secondary Programs – The request includes \$726.8 million to support base funding for the 169 BIE elementary and secondary schools and 14 dormitories providing educational services to 47,000 individual students in 23 States. The budget proposes \$20.9 million for Early Child and Family Development and \$14.3 million for Education Program Enhancements. The budget continues to promote educational self-determination for tribal

communities and requests \$81.5 million to fully fund the calculated Tribal Grant Support Costs need for Tribes that choose to operate BIE-funded schools.

Post-Secondary Programs – The request includes \$98.0 million for Post-Secondary programs to operate two post-secondary institutions, administer grants to 29 tribal colleges and universities, and fund two tribal technical colleges. The request preserves funding for core services, and reflects the full transition of Haskell and SIPI funding to forward funding.

Education Management – The request includes \$42.6 million for education management. Funding includes \$32.3 million for Education Program Management (EPM), an increase of \$7.3 million, which will enable BIE to build much-needed capacity in acquisition, school safety and repairs, performance tracking, and technical support to the field. The request also includes \$10.3 million for information technology to support the wide area network infrastructure and other systems used by BIE-funded schools.

Tribal Priority Allocations – The 2020 budget proposes Tribal Priority Allocation funding of \$16.1 million.

Education Construction

In addition to support from the Administration's Public Lands Infrastructure Fund legislative proposal, the President's budget includes \$68.9 million in annual funding for Education Construction. The budget includes \$62.8 million for facility improvement and repair at existing schools. Available funding from prior years will complete school construction on the 2004 school replacement list and continue design/build construction for schools on the 2016 school replacement list. The budget includes \$5.1 million for BIE employee housing repair and new funding of \$1.0 million for employee housing replacement. In 2020, BIE will continue to manage new construction activities through a reimbursable agreement with Indian Affairs.

Fixed Costs

Fixed costs of \$1.9 million are fully funded in this request.

This FY 2020 budget supports classroom instruction, and prioritizes programs serving the broadest number of students. The 2020 budget request aligns resources with management responsibilities, addresses recommendations of the Government Accountability Office and the DOI Office of the Inspector General and will provide BIE the autonomy and accountability needed to improve service delivery to, and by, BIE-funded schools.

Bureau of Indian Affairs

The mission of the Bureau of Indian Affairs is to enhance the quality of life, promote economic opportunity, and carry out the Federal responsibility to protect and improve the trust assets of American Indians, Indian Tribes, and Alaska Natives.

The request for BIA and the AS-IA Office is \$1.9 billion in current appropriations. Within this total, the budget prioritizes base funding for Tribes and provides full funding for estimated Contract Support Costs, a total of \$285.9 million; an additional \$2.5 million for law enforcement priorities such as combating opioids; and \$45.6 million for water settlements to enable the Department to meet Federal responsibilities outlined in enacted settlement with Indian Tribes.

Operation of Indian Programs - The 2020 budget for the Operation of Indian Programs account is \$1.5 billion. In general, the 2020 budget gives priority to base program funding.

Promote Tribal Self-Determination

The 2020 budget provides \$326.0 million for programs that support tribal government activities. Within this, the budget includes \$178.9 million for self-governance compact activities for self-governance Tribes and \$75.3 million to support Consolidated Tribal Government Programs for Tribes operating under P.L. 93-638 contracts.

New Tribes Funding – The budget includes \$1.3 million to continue Federal support for six Virginia Tribes federally recognized by an act of Congress in January 2018.

Contract Support Costs – The 2020 funding for Contract Support Costs is \$285.9 million. The request fully supports estimated needs assuming BIA program funding at the 2020 request. The President’s budget continues to request funding for CSC in a separate indefinite current account to ensure full funding for this priority.

Protect Indian Country

Public Safety Programs - The 2020 budget includes \$409.2 million for Public Safety and Justice Activities, of which \$376.7 million directly supports 191 law enforcement programs and 96 corrections programs run both by Tribes and direct services. The budget includes \$30.9 million for Tribal Courts and \$22.3 million for Tribal Justice Support programs, which include Violence Against Women Act training and implementation strategies critical to the protection of women in Indian communities.

Specifically with regards to the opioid epidemic plaguing out communities, the President has made it a focal point of his Administration to address and combat this crisis. This request also includes \$10.0 million, a \$2.5 million increase, to address the opioid crisis, which has been particularly devastating in Indian Country. This initiative expands BIA capacity to address the

increase in drug-related activities through interdiction programs to reduce drug use, distribution, and drug-related crime. The initiative will also support the Office of Justice Services participation in intra- and inter-agency initiatives. Targeting opioid and substance abuse prevention efforts will, enable BIA to better align, leverage, and coordinate with other Federal efforts and resources to combat the opioid crisis.

Support Indian Communities

Support Economic Opportunities – In support of efforts on domestic energy dominance and economic development, the 2020 budget funds the Community and Economic Development activity at \$44.4 million and features investments in Indian energy activities, including development on tribal lands. Income from energy and minerals production is the largest source of revenue generated from natural resources on trust lands, with energy and mineral revenue of over \$1.0 billion paid to tribal governments and individual mineral rights owners in 2018.

Human Services Programs – Sustaining families is critical to fostering thriving Indian communities. The Human Services activity includes \$143.0 million for programs providing social services which includes \$74.7 million for Welfare Assistance, and \$64.9 million for Social Services and Indian Child Welfare Act protections.

Manage Trust Resources and Lands

Natural Resource Programs – The 2020 budget proposes \$184.1 million for natural resource management programs which include agriculture, forestry, water resources, and fish, wildlife and parks activities.

The budget includes \$54.8 million for BIA Forestry programs supporting the Administration's active forest management reforms through management of Indian forest lands by 300 Tribes across 18.7 million acres. The funding supports the development, maintenance, and enhancement of forest resources in accordance with sustained yield principles included in forest management plans. The budget also includes \$14.5 million for Fish, Wildlife and Parks to support tribal activities in fisheries operations and maintenance, outdoor recreation, public access, and conservation enforcement and \$10.6 million for Water Resources management activities. The budget includes \$14.0 million for the Irrigation Operation and Maintenance program to support operation, maintenance, and rehabilitation of Indian irrigation project infrastructure, including the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project; payments required by established legal directives; reimbursement to the Bureau of Reclamation for water storage costs; and continued delivery of water by and to irrigation systems.

Real Estate Services Programs – To meet our fiduciary trust responsibilities, the 2020 budget

proposes \$122.0 million for real estate services programs. The budget supports the processing of Indian trust-related documents such as land title and records and geospatial data to support land and water resource use, energy development, and protection and restoration of ecosystems and important lands. The budget includes \$12.7 million for probate services to determine ownership of Indian trust assets essential to economic development and accurate payments to beneficiaries.

Land and Water Claims Settlements

The 2020 budget proposes \$45.6 million to meet Indian settlement commitments. Settlements resolve tribal land and water rights claims and ensure Tribes have access to land and water to meet domestic, economic, and cultural needs. Many of the infrastructure projects supported by these agreements improve the health and well-being of tribal members, preserve existing communities, and, over the long-term, bring the potential for jobs and economic development.

Infrastructure Investment

Construction – The Indian Affairs 2020 budget proposes \$58.5 million for Construction activities, including funding for deferred maintenance projects for public safety and justice facilities, resources management infrastructure such as irrigation projects and dams, and regional and agency offices serving tribal programs and operations in Indian Country. Beginning in 2020, funding for Education Construction will be requested in a separate account established in the Bureau of Indian Education. The budget proposes \$17.8 million for Safety of Dams projects, \$13.1 million for irrigation projects, and \$12.0 million for construction related to telecommunications and regional and agency offices serving tribal programs and operations in Indian Country.

Indian Country Roads – The BIA maintains nearly 29,000 miles of paved, gravel, and earth surface roads; and more than 900 bridges. The 2020 budget includes \$34.9 million for Road Maintenance to support pavement and gravel maintenance, remedial work on improved earth roads, bridge maintenance, and snow and ice control.

Concluding Statement

This FY 2020 budget supports the Administration's commitment to empower tribal communities, improve quality of life, create economic opportunities, promote efficient and effective governance, preserve and foster cultural heritage, and steward natural resources. Interior's programs maintain strong and productive government-to-government relationships with Tribes, helping to promote tribal nation-building and self-determination.