

Independent Investigation Clears Sweeney's Handling of CARES ACT Tribal Registration Data

Under Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Tara Sweeney's leadership, the Trump Administration has delivered unprecedented results in working alongside Indian Country and supporting their Tribal sovereignty. Most recently in battling the pandemic that has disproportionately impacted Tribal communities, the Department of the Interior assisted the Treasury Department as they distributed the largest funding amount ever provided to American Indians and Alaska Natives.

The CARES Act, which was passed by an overwhelming bipartisan majority of Congress, included a historic \$8 billion to be allocated to Tribes by Treasury, in consultation with the Department of the Interior and Tribal governments. In preparation for these crucial disbursements, Treasury and Interior hosted in-depth Tribal consultations on April 2nd and 9th with nearly 3,000 participants representing Indian Country and Alaska Native villages, and Interior provided Treasury with recommendations on qualified expenditures and a draft funding formula.

During the process to disperse funding from the coronavirus relief fund, erroneous, partisan and lowly allegations were lodged by Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and other members of Congress that Assistant Secretary Sweeney and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) officials purposefully released Tribal information to Alaska Native. The Office of Inspector General for the Department of the Interior investigated, and subsequent findings fully exonerates Assistant Secretary Sweeney and the BIA team from intentional wrongdoing.

Notably, the [final report](#) from the OIG states:

“We found no evidence suggesting that DOI or Treasury employees worked together or separately to intentionally release this confidential tribal information to Alaska Native Corporations, and we found no evidence of coordinated disclosure or misconduct.”

Assistant Secretary Sweeney has been resolute in upholding her ethical responsibilities and has complied with all laws and regulations during her tenure. She has worked tirelessly to support Interior's trust responsibilities to Indian Country and Alaska Native villages. Ms. Sweeney's strong leadership approach has always been focused on inclusiveness, transparency and partnership, and it is unfortunate that some desired to sow division during a time of crisis with unfounded allegations of favoritism.

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