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TRANSCRIPT OF SACRAMENTO TRIBAL CONSULTATION

HELD ON

THURSDAY, MAY 22, 2025

10:00 A.M.

650 CAPITAL MALL

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<p style="text-align: right;">Page 2</p> <p>1 SACRAMENTO WORKFORCE EFFICIENCY/PRODUCTIVITY AND 2 EMERGENCY PERMITTING CONSULTATION 3 HELD ON 4 THURSDAY, MAY 22, 2025 5 10:00 A.M. 6 7 BEN DUNCAN: Department of Government 8 Efficiency Workforce Optimization initiative, and 9 the Department of Interior Emergency Permitting 10 Procedures as part of Executive Order 14156, 11 declaration of a national energy emergency. 12 For clarity throughout today's sessions 13 we're going to refer to those as Workforce 14 Efficiency and Productivity, and Emergency 15 Permitting Procedures. 16 As a matter of introduction, my name is 17 Ben Duncan. I'm part of a contracted team with the 18 Department of Interior as well with some of my 19 colleagues in the back. Want to wave, Jackson, 20 Kyle, there we go. 21 And then also with us is Derrick Beetso 22 from Hayilka who is also part of this contracting 23 team who will be recording comments that are made 24 today. 25 So along with the leadership here that you</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 4</p> <p>1 folks online. During the meeting you can use the 2 chat function or you can email Jackson Gould at 3 JGould@kearnswest.com. 4 Comments are not going to be accepted via 5 the chat. We will put a link in the comment -- or 6 into the chat section that provides access for 7 written public comment. I'll also note, you'll see 8 some QR codes around the room today. That will get 9 you access to the slides, so everything that we're 10 going to show on here you can access through a QR 11 code. We have some other QR codes as we go through 12 the presentation as well, if that's helpful for you. 13 This consultation is being recorded. And 14 I confirm that we are recording? Kyle? Yes. Okay. 15 This is recorded and it's closed to the public and 16 to the press. 17 So how we're going to move through our 18 day, we'll start with an opening and then we'll 19 provide an overview of what the topics are for 20 consultation. So we'll have introductions to the 21 team that's to my right, the leadership, some 22 introduction to the department and Bureau of Indian 23 Affairs work. 24 We'll talk about and give you some 25 background on each of the executive orders, 14210</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 3</p> <p>1 see, and we'll introduce the Department of Interior 2 leadership and representatives, we also have other 3 folks from DOI who are actively listening, capturing 4 comments that will show up in the room today. 5 I'm going to move through some kind of 6 opening housekeeping logistics before passing it off 7 to the team. So we're on first floor, as you know. 8 There's exits in the back and corners of the room. 9 The restrooms are in the back corner of the building 10 here, and again coffee and donuts. 11 And then this is a hybrid consultation, so 12 we have the folks in the room. We do have many 13 folks who have joined us virtually. For those who 14 are joined virtually, you will be muted and off 15 camera until we open it up for comment, and then 16 we'll ask you to unmute. We'll invite you in for 17 comment. 18 So for those who are online, it's really 19 helpful for us if you could rename yourself. So if 20 you hover over your name or box where your picture 21 would be, hover over that, there's three ellipses. 22 Click rename, your name, your position title, and 23 the Tribe or organization that you're attending on 24 behalf of. 25 We do have technical support, again, for</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 5</p> <p>1 and 14156, as well as the Secretary Order 3429. And 2 then you'll get some, again some background on the 3 proposed workforce efficiency strategies for the 4 department. 5 We have structured this to have kind of 6 two conversations. The first part of our time 7 together will be a leader to leader consultation. 8 Then we're going to give you background, we'll take 9 comment and dialogue on both of those topics. 10 We will take a break once we've kind of 11 worked through those conversations, and then any 12 additional public comment -- or additional Tribal 13 comment from organizations and other 14 representatives, we'll open it up and get as much as 15 we can from that group, and we'll wrap up and get 16 you out of here. 17 So just to reiterate, we're going to 18 prioritize comments and dialogue with leadership, or 19 designated leadership from federally recognized 20 Tribes before we open to hear from others. 21 After that we'll move to Tribal 22 organization and other representatives who would 23 like to offer comment. So for Tribal leaders 24 online, I'm actually going to ask that folks raise 25 their hand. We have a sign-up sheet in the room, so</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 6</p> <p>1 if your Tribal leader didn't have a chance to sign 2 up for comment, we have those at the front. 3 For those online, if you're a Tribal 4 leader, raise your hand and we'll get you in the 5 queue. And when we get to that part of the agenda, 6 we'll go kind of back and forth in the room and with 7 virtual participants. 8 Are you seeing hands raised? Okay. 9 So as a reminder, if you're a Tribal 10 leader who is participating online, we'd ask you to 11 raise your hand to sign up. Thank you, I'm seeing 12 some hands. 13 So when we open up for broader comment, 14 we're going to ask that folks are just mindful of 15 the time so we can hear from as many people as 16 possible. We may request a time limit when we get 17 to that part of the agenda based on the number of 18 individuals that are interested in providing 19 comment. 20 And then finally written comments can be 21 emailed to consultation@bia.gov or by mail. I won't 22 read the full address out, on or before 11:59 p.m. 23 Eastern Time on July 7th, 2025. 24 As a reminder, these are closed to the 25 public and the press. It's recorded. We do have a</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 8</p> <p>1 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning, so I didn't want to 2 have her have to stand up here and do the 3 presentation. 4 We also learned quite a bit on Tuesday up 5 in Anchorage where we did a seven-and-a-half hour 6 consultation without a break, so we are structuring 7 it slightly different today because we want to make 8 sure that Tribal leaders have the opportunity to go 9 first and actually have a dialogue with the Interior 10 leadership, which we weren't able to get to on 11 Tuesday, so lessons learned and hopefully this will 12 be a great session today. I've got to remember to 13 continue to speak into the mic. 14 With me today is Kelly Rael. So Kelly is 15 the special assistant to the Assistant Secretary of 16 Indian Affairs. She was one of our first politicals 17 that started back in mid February, and a wonderful 18 addition to our team. We've got Kevin Bearquiver 19 from Bureau of Trust Funds Administration. He'll be 20 speaking to the BTFS slides -- BTFA slides here in a 21 moment. Jason Freihage who is the Department 22 Assistant Secretary of Management, and then Sharon 23 Pinto with BIE will speak to the BIE as well. 24 I'm just going to go very quickly through 25 this slide deck. We found that we spent too much</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 7</p> <p>1 court reporter that's going to create a transcript 2 to ensure that everything is accurately captured, 3 the substance of your comments. That's going to all 4 be posted, as well as the slides on the BIA web 5 page. 6 And then for Tribal leaders and elected 7 representatives, prior to making a comment if you 8 could please state your name, your title, and your 9 Tribal affiliation, we'll be able to accurately 10 capture that for the record. 11 So with that, I'm going to pass it to 12 Kelly Rael to introduce -- oh, yeah, Bryan, sorry. 13 BRYAN MERCIER: Good morning everyone. 14 I'm Bryan Mercier, (Native language spoken), 15 Clackamas, Calapooia, Grand Ronde. So good morning 16 everyone, my name is Bryan Mercier. I am an 17 enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of Grand 18 Ronde out of Clackamas and Calapooia descent, out of 19 the Portland area. Good to be here again in 20 Sacramento before many of the Tribal leaders that I 21 recognize today. 22 We are continuing today, my colleague 23 Kelly Rael had an airline trip from hell yesterday 24 from Anchorage, Alaska. She didn't get in until 25 after midnight and didn't get to bed until I think</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 9</p> <p>1 time on this as well in Alaska, so we're going to 2 try to really open it up because we're here to hear 3 from you. 4 Next slide, please. 5 I'm not sure who's controlling the slides. 6 I'm not able to control it here. Okay. So 7 obviously we're here to consult on a couple of 8 executive orders and secretary orders that pertain 9 to workforce efficiency and NEPA. I'm not going to 10 read the slides. You all have been following the 11 news and are closely tracking these executive 12 orders, but we're really looking to hear from you 13 all on these matters. 14 Next slide. Let's see if this works. 15 KYLE VINT: -- for you, if you just tell 16 me -- 17 BRYAN MERCIER: Yeah, please do. Yeah, 18 that would be great, if you could. 19 So the first really is the DOGE executive 20 order, 14210, workforce optimization initiative. 21 Much of the Department of Interior is a few months 22 ahead of us. We actually have been exempted and 23 paused our initiatives until we've completed these 24 consultations, so today is the second of I believe 25 seven that we're doing across the country over the</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 10</p> <p>1 next three weeks.</p> <p>2 But the executive order really is intended</p> <p>3 to optimize our workforce, streamline the</p> <p>4 bureaucracy, and deliver services in a more</p> <p>5 efficient manner. We are looking for ideas from you</p> <p>6 on how to restructure Indian Affairs to support a</p> <p>7 more efficient interaction with you all, maybe</p> <p>8 identifying barriers to funding, receiving funding,</p> <p>9 since much of the Indian Affairs programs have been</p> <p>10 contracted or compacted through the Self-</p> <p>11 Determination Act, and increasing our support to</p> <p>12 continue that trend that we've seen over the last 50</p> <p>13 years of Tribes taking and administering federal</p> <p>14 programs.</p> <p>15 Next slide, please.</p> <p>16 Secretarial Order 3429 was a recent</p> <p>17 Secretarial Order where Secretary Burgum delegated</p> <p>18 authority to the Assistant Secretary of Policy</p> <p>19 Management Budget to consolidate many of the</p> <p>20 administrative functions across the department, so</p> <p>21 all the various hallways and bureaus functions such</p> <p>22 as IT, HR, finance are being proposed to be</p> <p>23 consolidated.</p> <p>24 And as I mentioned earlier, we're seeing</p> <p>25 that occur across other hallways ahead of us, but</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 12</p> <p>1 Deputy Assistant Secretary for Management, or DASM</p> <p>2 which is not a great acronym, but in short what we</p> <p>3 do is we're the business operations for most of</p> <p>4 Indian Affairs. We either provide the direct</p> <p>5 service or we have policy oversight of the functions</p> <p>6 carried out by the bureaus. So a lot like a chief</p> <p>7 operating officer at a company or answer else.</p> <p>8 I just hit this button? Oh, next slide,</p> <p>9 okay.</p> <p>10 So in short, we have five real main</p> <p>11 pieces. So one is Office of Budget and Performance</p> <p>12 Management. For those of you that are involved in</p> <p>13 the Tribal Interior Budget Council, you'd work a lot</p> <p>14 with our budget team. They do budget formulation.</p> <p>15 They organize that across all of Indian</p> <p>16 Affairs, so BIA, BTFA, BIAN, Office of the Assistant</p> <p>17 Secretary working with the budget staff in each of</p> <p>18 those entities to present a good approach to both</p> <p>19 OMB, the department, and Congress.</p> <p>20 Then we also have our office of the Chief</p> <p>21 Financial Officer which is your classic finance</p> <p>22 activity that most people are aware of, and includes</p> <p>23 also acquisitions. This is the team that's helped</p> <p>24 increase our acquisitions from about when I started</p> <p>25 from \$200 million a year to over \$600 million, and</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 11</p> <p>1 that is the proposal that's before you today as</p> <p>2 well.</p> <p>3 Next slide, please.</p> <p>4 So I'm going to talk a little bit about</p> <p>5 the various offices and functions, and I'll have my</p> <p>6 colleagues maybe stay at their seats and go ahead</p> <p>7 and speak to their slides when we get to that, but</p> <p>8 the Office of Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs</p> <p>9 is the overarching Indian Affairs hallway.</p> <p>10 Next slide, please.</p> <p>11 They provide policy and leadership</p> <p>12 direction to BIA, BIE, BTFA, and various other</p> <p>13 smaller programs within the Assistant Secretary of</p> <p>14 Indian Affairs hallway. They developed the new and</p> <p>15 revised regulations, policy direction, and oversee</p> <p>16 the White House Council on Native American affairs.</p> <p>17 Yeah, and all of you are tracking that we</p> <p>18 have a nominee, Billy Kirkland, who we're still</p> <p>19 waiting a confirmation hearing on to fill out our</p> <p>20 political team. We're hoping that will be July,</p> <p>21 June or July.</p> <p>22 Next slide, please.</p> <p>23 DASM, Jason may talk a little bit about</p> <p>24 DASM.</p> <p>25 JASON FREIHAGE: I'm Jason Freihage,</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 13</p> <p>1 when we started about 20-ish percent, went to Indian</p> <p>2 Economic Enterprises and the last few years was 75</p> <p>3 percent of that funding has gone To Indian Economic</p> <p>4 Enterprises, so a lot more money going into Indian</p> <p>5 country.</p> <p>6 And then they also do audits, and so the</p> <p>7 other classic things you think of in a CFO office.</p> <p>8 Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer. This is</p> <p>9 really just your classic HR functions. And in this</p> <p>10 they provide, they actually do the work for BIA and</p> <p>11 AS-IA offices, and then they coordinate and do</p> <p>12 oversight over the HR functions that are carried out</p> <p>13 by BIE for their team.</p> <p>14 The Office of Facilities Properties Safety</p> <p>15 Management, so they kind of do like the name says,</p> <p>16 oversight for property activities conducted by BIE,</p> <p>17 BIA, similarly in the construction area. They</p> <p>18 manage the funds for construction, BIA regions and</p> <p>19 BIE take care of facility improvement and repair</p> <p>20 projects, about -- generally about \$10 million and</p> <p>21 less.</p> <p>22 And then that, this team carries out the</p> <p>23 major replacement construction which tends to be</p> <p>24 anywhere from \$50 million projects to over \$200</p> <p>25 million. Similarly this is the team that does</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 14</p> <p>1 105(1) Tribal lease activity, which especially in 2 California, we don't have quite as many facilities 3 out here so 105(1) might be more familiar to some of 4 you. 5 And we also have a Public Health and 6 Safety team. And then finally we have our Office of 7 Information Technology, which is just kind of your 8 classic IT shop of both enterprise services and 9 they've been building out learning management 10 systems at BIE and really enhancing IT capabilities 11 at BIE schools. 12 Thank you. 13 BRYAN MERCIER: Now that I know there's a 14 clicker, I'm going to try this here. Excellent. So 15 BIA, so this is my area of expertise. So as you're 16 aware, the BIA is the primary trustee within the 17 federal family on behalf of American Indians and 18 Alaska Natives in the United States. 19 A lot of what we do is related to trust 20 assets such as land and mineral rights, but it's 21 much more extensive beyond that to treaty and trust 22 obligations. So I'm going to keep going. 23 There's really four core components. We 24 have the Office of Justice Services which is our law 25 enforcement arm and detention services, Office of</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 16</p> <p>1 SHARON PINTO: So are they -- is it 2 working? Can you all hear me? Thank you. 3 Good morning again. I am Sharon Pinto. 4 I'm the Deputy Bureau Director for BIE, school 5 operations. I am a member of the Navajo Nation, and 6 again like to thank you all for being here today and 7 allowing us to have a conversation with you and hear 8 from you on the topics that we are presenting today. 9 So thank you for your time, and we appreciate that. 10 As you all know, we have a few schools 11 within the State of California as well as Nevada and 12 Arizona. I'm not sure how many visitors we have 13 from the surrounding states at this consultation. 14 BIE, we primarily serve K through 12 15 school population. At the same time we also serve 16 our FACE program and our FOCUS program that serves K 17 through -- well, pre-K student population, and also 18 working with our parents in the community in 19 supporting the educational needs of our students as 20 well as the TCUs that we serve across the country as 21 well, and primarily the Haskell University and SIPI 22 Polytechnic School located in Albuquerque, New 23 Mexico. 24 Overall our widest population of students 25 that we serve is over 400,000 students that we serve</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 15</p> <p>1 Indian Services which is a lot of our human 2 services, Tribal government, transportation. Office 3 of Trust Services which is forestry, fire, other 4 kind of trust asset management activities. And then 5 we have the Office of Field Operations which 6 oversees the 12 regions. 7 And Bart Stevens, the deputy Bureau 8 Director from the Field Office is here as well. 9 Bart, if you want to just raise your hand and say 10 hi. 11 One of the things that happens in Indian 12 country is the rumor mill that often gets posted to 13 Facebook, and one of the rumors that I want to 14 quickly dispel that we heard a lot in Alaska, is 15 there's a rumor that there is plans to consolidate 16 the 12 regions into six, and there have been no such 17 conversations that I'm aware of, or Kelly is aware 18 of, at the department about that, so just want to 19 get ahead of that if you all have comments and 20 questions about the rumor that there's a 21 consolidation plan already in place. This is simply 22 not true. 23 But let me hand it off to our next 24 colleague, who I believe is BIE. Are the mics 25 working now? Yeah, they are.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 17</p> <p>1 across the country, and 64 Reservations, 23 states, 2 and our primary focus like I said is K through 12 at 3 40,000 students that we serve through our K through 4 12. 5 We have 183 BIE schools and 55 of those 6 schools are directly served through bureau operated 7 school system, and 128 of our schools are Tribally 8 controlled school locations under the authority of 9 Public Law 100-297 agreements, grant agreements. 10 So thank you again for your support and 11 being here and allowing us some time to dialogue 12 with you today, and hear from you on the topics that 13 we are presenting. Thank you. (Native language 14 spoken). 15 BRYAN MERCIER: Thank you, Sharon. 16 Let's go to Kevin at BTFA. 17 KEVIN BEARQUIVER: Thank you. Good 18 morning. Good to be back here in my second home. 19 For those of you, I'm Kevin Bearquiver. I'm an 20 enrolled member of the MHA Nation from the great 21 state of North Dakota. 22 I have lived in California four times 23 throughout my life. I've lived up at Hoopa, I've 24 lived at Quartz Valley. I've lived in Redding, and 25 I've lived in Sacramento, and so it's great to be</p>

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1 back. Like I said, my second home, and I miss a lot
2 of you, a lot of wonderful people that I have worked
3 with throughout my lifetime, and it's good to see
4 everybody.

5 Bureau of Trust Funds. Margaret Williams
6 is the acting director for the Bureau of Trust Funds
7 Administration, and she's online, and she apologizes
8 that she cannot be here today in person, but she is
9 online and so she is listening. And so any comments
10 that are directed towards the Bureau of Trust Funds
11 Administration she will be able to address.

12 The Bureau of Trust Funds Administration,
13 the Bureau of Indian Affairs manages the assets,
14 like the timber, the natural resources, or helps
15 manage I should say, co-manages, with the Tribes,
16 right.

17 And so on, for us, we have the fiduciary
18 responsibility for the financial assets, the places
19 of like when we recede in the timber assets. We
20 recede in the oil and gas. We manage those funds on
21 behalf of Native Americans and Alaska Natives.

22 Right now we currently, our portfolio is
23 over \$9 billion in assets that we manage and invest
24 for Tribal members and Tribes. We have over 4,300
25 Tribal accounts this we manage.

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1 Settlements, a lot of the settlement
2 accounts are managed by us until such time Tribes
3 reach the agreements or meet the requirements under
4 the law, and then we release those funds.

5 And then of course there's over, there's
6 414,000 individual IAM accounts that we manage
7 throughout the country.

8 We offer technical guidance on trust
9 accounts, working with beneficiaries. When it
10 coming to managing Tribal assets, or individual
11 assets, we are the first place, like the first
12 responders, right. We respond, and we also have the
13 Trust Beneficiary call center that fields roughly,
14 what is it, like, I don't have the exact numbers but
15 right now we are also a, because we have the Trust
16 Beneficiary call center, we have also been
17 designated as a HISP in 2019.

18 We're a high impact service provider, and
19 with that there's a lot of responsibilities with
20 regards to improving technology and making things
21 more beneficial and more customer responsive to the
22 beneficiaries.

23 One of the things that we've recently
24 enacted is what's called an IVR, an interactive
25 voice response. So beneficiaries now have access to

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1 their accounts 24 hours a day. They can call in and
2 work using IVR, using technology, to access account
3 information 24 hours a day.

4 We don't need to have somebody in the
5 office or somebody at the call center. They have
6 that access. And those are the kinds of things that
7 we're talking about today. Like what are the
8 improvements that we can see that can make things
9 more efficient for Tribal members and for Tribes.

10 Like, if you think back like five years
11 ago, like what was there, you know, what was the
12 difference pre-pandemic, like how we were
13 interacting with you pre-pandemic, and then five
14 years, flash forward five years, you know, what are
15 those technical differences that we have?

16 Like, we do a lot more online meetings.
17 We're able to provide a lot more things like this,
18 consultations like this where we could reach
19 hundreds of people. Those are the kinds of things
20 that we want to create efficiencies, you know.

21 Think five years from today what will that
22 look like, what will the efficiencies that we can
23 create to help improve the lives of all the people
24 throughout Indian country, you know, those are the
25 kinds of things.

Page 21

1 Think back, think back of when, before we
2 had like Tribal consortiums, right, and then how
3 Tribes banding together, creating our consortiums,
4 and working with Indian Affairs in partnerships, and
5 making things simpler and streamlined.

6 Those are the kinds of efficiencies that
7 we're talking about that we need to look at and
8 create, and find models that work, and move those
9 throughout the country and help improve all of our
10 processes. Those are the kinds of efficiencies we
11 need to look forward.

12 How can we better utilize our
13 technologies. How can we improve our services to
14 you, and so, thank you very much. Looking forward
15 to consultation.

16 BRYAN MERCIER: Excellent. Thank you,
17 Kevin.

18 So real quick, just to give you all kind
19 of some high level strategies that we are taking,
20 and you all can download the slide deck. It's
21 available. There's QR codes and online.

22 There's really three kind of pillars of
23 how we are approaching the workforce efficiencies.
24 One is upholding our trust responsibilities and
25 remaining focused on delivering services to our

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 22</p> <p>1 clients and customers, to you all, so we're focused 2 on continuity and improvement of those services. 3 So we believe we can do that through 4 expanded Tribal self-determination and self- 5 governance which would reduce federal bureaucracy 6 and regulation, allowing for you all to administer 7 these programs in a much more streamlined and 8 effective manner. 9 And we want to work with you all to 10 collaboratively and sustainably develop workforce 11 strategies that allow for that, resilience and 12 development of your own Tribal communities and 13 economies. So that's one. 14 Second is ensure that we're in alignment 15 with the president's orders. These are executive 16 orders from the president, so we do need to make 17 sure that we are adhering to them to the best of our 18 abilities based on the consultation that we hear 19 from you today. 20 So our approach to that is really using 21 data-driven decision making aligned with the 22 priorities and needs of your communities. That may 23 require us to invest more in technology and 24 automation, and use some of the industry practices 25 that are out there that Indian Affairs may be a</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 24</p> <p>1 deliver the education to our youth. 2 And then they're looking also at 3 investments in technology and other aspects to 4 support that. 5 BTFA, it's really focusing on the 6 statutory requirements, and as Kevin touched on a 7 little bit, finding those models that work well 8 through the evolution of online banking and other 9 kinds of technology to facilitate services in BTFA. 10 They used to have trust officers in all 11 the agencies. Now they have an online tool, and 12 they have a phone number that people can have an 13 automated response to get their IAM account 14 information, for example. 15 Okay. So I'm going to get into the second 16 part of this consultation, which I apologize. We 17 added this about three weeks ago when it came out 18 from the department. The department asked us to, 19 since we had these scheduled consultations, to make 20 use of these consultations to talk a little bit 21 about the streamlined emergency permitting 22 procedures, so I'll talk about those. 23 The Executive Order 14156 really is 24 intended to address the national energy emergency 25 declaration by the president, and it's intended for</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 23</p> <p>1 little bit behind on. 2 Three, it's the efficient use of DOI 3 resources. So the department has a lot of 4 resources, other hallways within the department have 5 a lot of resources, perhaps even more than Indian 6 Affairs so there's opportunities there for us to 7 leverage those and streamline and unify some of the 8 core business functions and be able to better serve 9 you all by leveraging those departmental resources. 10 So we're exploring merging offices and 11 removing management layers where efficiencies are 12 possible, and building capacity and functional areas 13 to improve performance. 14 So this is an important slide for you all 15 in the slide deck, the study, because this is 16 largely our approach right now, and based on the 17 consultation and feedback we hear from you, we will 18 adjust from there. 19 BIE and BTFA have also specific 20 strategies. I'm not familiar with these as much, 21 but it's really for BIE investing in front line 22 educators, protecting those folks that are 23 delivering services in our schools, in our clients, 24 is really their strategy and approach here, and 25 power and support those teachers to continue to</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 25</p> <p>1 us to streamline just for energy projects, so the 2 scope is fairly narrow, a revised timeline for the 3 the NEPA procedures accordingly. 4 So here are some of the high level facts 5 of that order. We call it the alternative NEPA 6 compliance process. It's an expedited Section 7, 7 expedited Section 106 on again just energy projects 8 as proposed, and they must be declared by the 9 Department of Labor opportunities, alternative NEPA 10 procedures before we'd implement them. 11 We have not adopted these in Indian 12 Affairs. We are on pause and holding until we've 13 had these consultations and hear from you all before 14 we decide if and how to adopt these procedures going 15 forward. 16 Okay. So yeah, so we're about to head 17 into questions, but I want to give Kelly a moment. 18 She has a statement from the secretary that she 19 wants to read, so I'm going to hand the mic over to 20 Kelly. 21 KELLY RAE: Thank you. And again I want 22 to apologize. I think between traveling from DC to 23 Alaska, late evenings with sunshine, and then two 24 delays and lost baggage have kind of hit me right 25 now, so I apologize.</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 26</p> <p>1 And then also, like Bryan said, we are 2 still working on filling out bench with our 3 leadership, so we are hoping in coming weeks to a 4 month we'll actually get a hearing for our nominee 5 Billy Kirkland, and he looks forward to engaging 6 with you guys in the future. 7 So I just want to read a statement real 8 quick. 9 During his tenure as North Dakota 10 governor, Secretary Burgum was recognized for 11 fostering positive relationships with the state's 12 Tribal Nations. 13 The Department of Interior and the Bureau 14 of Indian Affairs remained committed to our trust 15 responsibilities of protecting Tribal treaty rights, 16 land assets, and resources in addition to its duty 17 to carry out the mandates of federal law with 18 respect to American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes 19 and Villages. 20 Before proceeding with any potential 21 reduction in force actions, the department will work 22 through the Tribal consultation process to ensure 23 that any proposed actions are informed by meaningful 24 input from Tribal Nations, and fully consider the 25 delivery of services to Indian country.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 28</p> <p>1 I hand this off to you or not, Ben? You flagged me 2 -- I can walk through it, so yeah. 3 So here's some guiding questions for you 4 all to consider before we open it up to Tribal 5 leaders for comments. 6 Again, what recommendations do you have to 7 improve efficiency through staffing, resource 8 sharing, process improvements, potential 9 consolidations of programs and offices. 10 One thing I will say about this 11 administration is they are looking to deregulate 25 12 CFR, you know, the regulations on Indian Affairs 13 which is probably literally about this thick. 14 So if you all have ideas, regulations, 15 concerns within there that you'd like to see 16 eliminated or streamlined, this is a good 17 opportunity to suggest that. 18 Current funding structures. How do we, 19 you know, better support Tribes by reducing the 20 administrative burden. It takes, when we receive 21 funding, often we're passing it through Title 1 and 22 Title 4 contracts and compacts. It takes months 23 because of the administrative process that we have 24 to go through to get it from Treasury to our 25 awarding officials to the Tribe, down in ASAP to be</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 27</p> <p>1 So I just wanted to read that. 2 A few weeks ago we had the Secretarial 3 Tribal Advisory Committee, and you know, it was 4 great input, you know, hearing from Tribal leaders 5 about the crisis with law enforcement, probate, and 6 obviously we know about the budget. 7 Secretary Burgum is, you know, as you know 8 he comes from the business side of the world, and he 9 is really driven on identifying the problem and 10 coming up with solutions. So he is really counting 11 on this consultation to really hear from you guys 12 about what we're doing right, what we're doing 13 wrong, and then what are your recommendations. 14 I don't know if you guys heard, the other 15 day he was at the House Appropriations Committee 16 testifying, and, you know, a big concern for him 17 right now is probate. And we have to work together 18 to figure out what we're going to do about this, and 19 so we would love to hear from you guys about the 20 issues that you're facing, and how we can best serve 21 you. 22 So I just wanted to take the time to say 23 that. So thank you. 24 BRYAN MERCIER: Thank you, Kelly. 25 So guiding questions for the comments. Do</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 29</p> <p>1 pulled down and used for those programs. 2 And so are there ideas of how better to do 3 that? And then of course we want to increase 4 support for furthering self-governance and self- 5 determination, not just within Indian Affairs but 6 beyond that at Interior and maybe other departments 7 as well. 8 So some guiding questions for the second 9 part. What are concerns that you have with this new 10 process and the timeline, the time frames that were 11 listed in the executive order? And are there 12 applicable situations where, you know, that are not 13 covered by the proposed process and time frames? 14 So very much want to hear from you, your 15 concerns and thoughts, and things we may have missed 16 through the executive order that we can now adjust 17 accordingly in Indian Affairs. 18 I think that may be our last slight. Yep, 19 I'm going to hand it off to Ben and he is going to 20 moderate. Appreciate you all for bearing with us. 21 Thank you. 22 BEN DUNCAN: So we're going to pivot in to 23 the consultation conversation. Just a couple notes 24 as we do. So for those in person, you see we have a 25 microphone set up in the middle of the podium, if</p>

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1 that's helpful. We're going to ask you, and I have
2 folks that signed up, Tribal leaders. I'll go in
3 order of who signed up.
4 We do have some Tribal leaders online, so
5 we'll kind of go both in the room, and then invite
6 folks virtually to provide comment.
7 So I think we're probably good. I don't
8 know if we have any folks on the phone, but just as
9 a reminder, star 9 raises hand on phone when we get
10 to that section.
11 Okay, sorry. So I'm going to just say
12 right off the bat, I'm going to do my best between
13 pronunciations and handwriting, so give me hopefully
14 some grace, but please teach me how to say your
15 name. You'll introduce yourself when you come up to
16 the mic.
17 So I'm going to start with Chairman
18 Serrell Smokey.
19 CHAIRMAN SMOKEY: Are we on? It might be
20 a little low, but we'll work with it. Break the ice
21 here.
22 I'm (Native language spoken), Serrell
23 Smokey, Chairman of the Washoe Tribe in Nevada and
24 California. I also serve as the President of the
25 Inter Tribal Council of Nevada which is a consortium

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1 of 28 Tribes and Colonies within the State of
2 Nevada.
3 I'm also our western region representative
4 for Secretary Burgum's Tribal Advisory Committee.
5 I'll keep it short, or somewhat brief, to
6 go over because I've been expressing a lot of
7 comments, the same comments in multiple
8 consultations, as well as the Tribal Advisory
9 Committee.
10 To start off with just, creating smaller
11 government is understandable for the federal
12 government. I mean, it's a grass roots conservatism
13 means of principle, I guess you could say, but in a
14 way this could be beneficial to Tribes, but if done
15 correctly. And that's working with the Tribes.
16 The BIA is responsible for carrying out
17 trust responsibility and this should not stop, but
18 at the same time Tribes can do a lot of things
19 ourselves, but there are Tribes that need the BIA to
20 be there to step up.
21 This was expressed just about a month or
22 two ago in our meeting down the street here, about
23 the worry about the closure of certain BIA offices
24 because these are the avenues that the Tribes take
25 to get these services that they need, get the

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1 funding that is supposed to be done by the BIA. So
2 there's huge concern there.
3 The administrative burden is horrible. It
4 leaves Tribes years behind, and I say years. I know
5 it was mentioned months, but years. For our
6 probate, I'll just -- we're the Washoe Tribe
7 ourselves, I'll give you an example.
8 I have a probate going back to 1997 that
9 still has not even been started yet. It's still
10 sitting there on the books. Now the BIA wants to
11 come and ask for help. A day late and a dollar
12 short. This should have been done years ago, and so
13 those are the types of administrative things.
14 The Tribes can help. We can work with the
15 offices, but the offices need to be up to par to be
16 able to providing those services. It's the same,
17 same issue for home titles, for land, and anything
18 regarding land.
19 Allotment lands. There's a huge issue,
20 especially for us. And then across the state, you
21 know. We have to jump through more hoops than
22 anybody else to get anything done for approvals to
23 do things on our own land, as opposed to if we were,
24 say, a private contractor, because the BIA has all
25 these regulations because the government doesn't

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1 feel that us Tribes can take care of ourselves.
2 But we can. Jurisdictional issues,
3 Tribes, we can do these things ourselves. We can
4 gain control. We can manage our own properties. We
5 can do things with our own environmental offices
6 well as other services.
7 How do we do that, is there are avenues in
8 place that give us the opportunities to. More 638
9 contracting, compacting. Increase self-governance
10 for Tribes instead of holding us back.
11 Well, at the same time allowing the BIA to
12 reconvene. It's their -- their government process
13 is to be able to provide Russ responsibility,
14 because right now it is seriously inefficient.
15 Economic development overall for Tribes is
16 -- Tribes are sovereign nations. We shouldn't have
17 to be forced to get approvals from the states to do
18 things to better ourselves. If that's the goal is
19 to get Tribes to become self-sufficient, which is
20 what a lot of us want, then why put more barriers in
21 front of us.
22 Every time there's something good for
23 Tribes that comes along in economic development, we
24 are forced by the government to work with the state.
25 Tobacco, smoke shops come around. You have to work

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 34</p> <p>1 with the state to work out the taxes. Fuel, gaming. 2 You got to get a state compact. 3 And even more recently cannabis for a lot 4 of Tribes. And then we have to go through the 5 state. We're sovereign entities that should be 6 working through the government. 7 In terms of deregulation, deregulation can 8 be very helpful. Again, we have so many barriers in 9 place that we have to jump over, hoops that we have 10 to jump through that we're constantly being held 11 back. 12 For environmental expedited permitting, 13 there's serious concern from myself, and I know from 14 our Tribes as well, especially regarding 15 environmental and historic preservation. 16 Historic preservation is even more so 17 because a lot of the wording that goes into these 18 proposals and changes talk about work being done on 19 Tribal lands and trust lands, but I'm sorry if I 20 offend some people, but it's all of our land. 21 I don't care who holds the title to it, it 22 is our Tribal lands. It's our homeland. I don't 23 use the word ancestral lands anymore because that's 24 saying that we acknowledge that it used to be ours, 25 but to us it's still our homelands no matter where</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 36</p> <p>1 thriving and it continues to, and more permits are 2 being approved for mining which is just a 3 disturbance of land, leaving giant holes in the 4 ground that when the sun hits it causes toxic 5 chemicals which go into the waterways. 6 Plus nobody's talking about when these 7 mines open. I said, where is the water going to 8 come from to work them, because they use huge 9 amounts of water. And those are areas that are just 10 separate from the ground disturbance that are not 11 being discussed. 12 And if they are, they are going to be in 13 separate meetings and we're not getting consultation 14 for those as well. 15 Overall especially when it comes to 16 mining, is there's no benefit to Tribes, not 17 specifically. Sometimes they may come around and 18 say, hey Tribe, we're going to be working around 19 your areas. We want to work with you. We'll give 20 you a \$1,000 scholarship for a student every year, 21 which does absolutely nothing. It doesn't even pay 22 for fuel for them to go in and out of school. 23 And this is coming from multi-billion 24 dollar companies, organizations, so it does not 25 benefit Tribes. We've been talking about this a</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 35</p> <p>1 it is. 2 And so when we talk about expediting 3 permits for environmental issues and also historic 4 preservation all over the place, you're going to be 5 talking about the disturbance of ground. And those 6 things are, that is our history in the ground. That 7 is the way we respect things to remain in the 8 ground, because that's our ancestors. 9 But if more disturbance is going to 10 happen, then it needs to be worked out through each 11 Tribe individually, because we all have different -- 12 may have different processes. There can't be a 13 blanket that just covers everything for everyone. 14 And that's been one of the huge issues 15 coming from federal governance and the barriers that 16 we have for Tribes. 17 When it comes to environmental, the health 18 of the land equals the health of the people. And so 19 if we're doing things that are causing more 20 disturbance, and I'm going to hit specifically on 21 mining, because mining within the State of Nevada 22 has never slowed down. 23 I know it was kind of mentioned that we 24 slowed down in mining, we slowed down this, that. 25 Well, not in the State of Nevada. It's been</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 37</p> <p>1 lot, especially within the Tribes in the State of 2 Nevada. 3 As Tribes, not all of us are against 4 everything. And an example is the expedited 5 permitting and deregulation. We have a saw mill on 6 our land just over the hill. Our lands are based 7 around the whole entire Tahoe Basin, around Lake 8 Tahoe. We were the first saw mill to open in the 9 Tahoe Basin in over 40 years. 10 So we're not against logging. We're not 11 against timber production, but we are against clear 12 cutting and those old ways of doing things. It just 13 must be done properly. The reason we do it the way 14 we do it is because it is our people stewarding the 15 lands the way that our people always have for 16 thousands of years, and getting back it that. 17 So it must be done properly. Working with 18 the Tribes. We only have a couple BIE schools, but 19 they are being impacted and affective within the 20 state, but we actually need more. Looking at 21 working with the Indian education within the entire 22 State of Nevada, we know we have issues that are 23 statistically higher than anybody across the state, 24 especially with chronic absenteeism, graduation 25 rates, all that.</p>

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1 And we need to be able to connect with our
2 students, so that's something we're in discussion
3 right now. So again, I'll keep it short in respect
4 for all the other Tribal leaders here.
5 I'll be providing written comments with
6 details on how we can make these things happen using
7 consortiums, using again the expanding self-
8 governance, because we can help and we can actually
9 do it and help ourselves as well as help the BIA,
10 BIE, and all these other programs.
11 So with that, also it's something not just
12 for the panel here, but also for everybody in the
13 room and listening, it is something that was just
14 mentioned a little bit ago, but also came straight
15 from Secretary Burgum is to challenge Tribes to come
16 up with the solutions.
17 And that's what I think we're for is to
18 come up with those solutions and help you all be the
19 solution and not just echo or issues that we've had
20 over and over again.
21 Like they say (Native language spoken).
22 Thank you.
23 BEN DUNCAN: Hello? Okay. So I'm going
24 to invite Vice Chair Donna Thompson.
25 I'll also make a note, we are asking folks

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1 to come up to the microphone, but if you -- we have
2 a roaming mic if that's easier for you.
3 Vice Chair.
4 DONNA THOMPSON: Morning. Thank you,
5 Chairman, for your comments. They were good ones.
6 My name is Donna Thompson. I am the Vice
7 Chairman for the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes in Fort
8 Hall, Idaho. Hi, Bryan.
9 And I'm going to be very specific. We
10 were appalled by the recent letters, or the actions
11 offered by DRP and Vera to Indian Affairs employees
12 and other departments with trust responsibilities
13 towards Indian country without consultation, which
14 is in direct conflict what was said here that those
15 wouldn't happen until after the consultation was
16 made.
17 This leads us to lose seven of our 16
18 people, or 44 percent workforce at our local agency,
19 and it causes disastrous consequences. And we urge
20 you to rescind these offers immediately.
21 This reduction in force is an attempt to
22 rush self-governance on Tribes without providing the
23 time, resources, and technical assistance to enable
24 success to us. Actions to optimize operations
25 should be considered after agreements are made,

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1 mandatory funding provisions are in place, and a
2 plan exists that ensures that treaty and trust
3 responsibilities are met.
4 We are not against 638 or self-governance,
5 but we just need the time to be able to do it
6 effectively.
7 Many of the inefficiencies that we face as
8 a result of too few BIA employees now is just going
9 to be a compounding effect that our local office
10 will now be reduced to filling one of five realty
11 positions managing over 400 agricultural and home
12 site properties with over 100,000 acres.
13 Realty is only one of our concerns on our
14 550,000 acre Reservation that is 97 percent Tribally
15 owned. Despite the ongoing cuts, I urge you to keep
16 BIA positions on the books, and the associated
17 funding to maintain capacity until we are able to do
18 so effectively.
19 Tribes should not be advising a federal
20 agency how to do its job to fulfill its trust and
21 treaty responsibility without seeing a plan.
22 And I would like to use this opportunity
23 to share two more additional concerns. First, the
24 restructuring of Indian Affairs to support more
25 efficient interactions with Tribes should not be

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1 consolidating local and regional offices into fewer
2 offices.
3 Efficiency is gained through having the
4 necessary personnel in local offices to work
5 directly with the Tribes. This includes providing
6 sufficient appraisers from the Appraisal and
7 Valuation Service Office, realty, environmental, and
8 other key personnel.
9 Specifically Indian Affairs needs its own
10 appraisers. Our backlog for land purchases and
11 exchange assignments in any given time is between 12
12 to 15 transactions, in part because of the
13 bottleneck completing appraisals.
14 Since BIA does not have its own,
15 efficiencies are lost. This causes financial
16 hardships for our people and a lack of trust.
17 Restructuring BIA should include hiring BIA
18 appraisals assigned to physically work from their
19 local realty offices, or give the Tribes the
20 opportunity to 638 those services.
21 Right now our fee to trust application
22 takes quite a bit of time. Just for us, the Tribe,
23 when we purchase, because our goal is to purchase
24 every bit of fee land that's within our Reservation
25 boundaries, but it takes us so many time to get that

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1 land back into trust from, once we purchase it from
2 whoever holds it in fee status.
3 So those are areas that we need assistance
4 in as well. And again, those have to have
5 appraisals. There's a number of bureaucratic
6 processes that we have to go through to get that
7 taken care of.
8 And then secondly regarding Executive
9 Order 14210, we cannot exercise our ratified treaty
10 rights to hunt and fish and gather if the government
11 does not protect our natural resources and the
12 environment. Reduced comment periods are impossible
13 to meet, and silence from the Tribes does not mean
14 consent.
15 Rushed environmental reviews will lead to
16 unnecessary destruction of sacred and culturally
17 important land, including burial sites, and prevent
18 us from exercising our treaty rights on impacted
19 lands.
20 In closing, we have multiple closed mines
21 on our Reservation. Bryan, you have been to those,
22 and those are super fun sites, created before NEPA
23 requirements were required. These mines still
24 haven't been cleaned up, and they've been in
25 existence for over 30 years.

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1 And again, they have the water and the
2 air, anything around them is very toxic and is
3 damaging to our lands, our wildlife, and our people.
4 So these mines prove that clean-up costs
5 for the environmental damage from future projects
6 will simply be deferred to my grandchildren. That's
7 not fair to them. So this, to me this is a future
8 expense that will be a failure of the DOGE
9 experiment.
10 And again, I'd like to thank you for your
11 time, but I want to again say it is not the Tribes'
12 responsibility to advise BIA or any other federal
13 agency on how to fulfill their trust responsibility,
14 however I do appreciate the fact that you're asking
15 us for our comments or our suggestions, and I hope
16 that you take those into consideration and really
17 listen to us on this.
18 So thank you.
19 BRYAN MERCIER: Ben, can I respond real
20 quick? Because Donna, you raised a really great
21 question about the DRP that we just opened up a week
22 ago.
23 And we did, we struggled with whether to
24 open up the second round of the Deferred Resignation
25 Program, or the fork in the road as folks know about

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1 it.
2 So early in the administration I was
3 acting assistant secretary for the first two months,
4 and there were broader initiatives that came down,
5 including our probationary employees being let go on
6 February 14th. Kelly started on the 18th, and
7 within a week we got more than half of those folks
8 back thanks to Kelly, and Ken, and Scott, and others
9 that joined our political team, until the
10 injunctions brought all our probationary employees
11 back.
12 We offered the first round of the DRP and
13 had very few employees actually opt into it, because
14 none of us believed it, to be honest, when we got
15 these emails. It just didn't seem real.
16 But, over the last few months our
17 employees had been demanding that we offer this
18 opportunity again. Largely because they are
19 observing what is happening across the government
20 and other departments and Department of Interior, so
21 we did feel an obligation to our staff to do this,
22 and we are hopeful that there will be enough of our
23 colleagues opt in that are perhaps retirement
24 eligible and ready to pass the torch to another
25 generation of leaders in Indian Affairs, that we can

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1 avoid any further reductions in force or other
2 impacts from the sufficiency.
3 But I hear you on the fact that the timing
4 was poor before the consultation, but if we wait any
5 longer, the incentive in the DRP is reduced and
6 folks were demanding it from us and really want us
7 to get it out as soon as possible.
8 So I just wanted to respond to that,
9 Donna, let you know.
10 DONNA THOMPSON: We all know each other
11 very well in our Fort Hall area, and I grew up
12 there. I've been involved in Tribal and politics
13 for years.
14 They didn't feel that they had any choice,
15 because of what has been happening. And that's sad,
16 and most of them are our own Tribal members.
17 So I'm really hoping that we're going to
18 be able to absorb them into our Tribal government,
19 providing the same service at a better level.
20 Thanks.
21 BRYAN MERCIER: And it was completely
22 voluntary, Donna, and we did have a number of
23 exemptions, actually. So many of our mission
24 critical functions were exempt, so many of our
25 functions that are social workers, a lot of our

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 46</p> <p>1 realty folks that do, were not able to do it.</p> <p>2 But yeah, I understand. You amongst other</p> <p>3 in your community, you're going to hear it for sure.</p> <p>4 BEN DUNCAN: I'd like to invite Chairman</p> <p>5 Steven Wadsworth -- Wadsworth. Thank you for</p> <p>6 correcting me.</p> <p>7 STEVEN WADSWORTH: Good morning. Thank</p> <p>8 you for having us. My name is Steven Wadsworth.</p> <p>9 I'm the Chairman of the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe.</p> <p>10 We are located in Nevada. We're the largest Tribe</p> <p>11 in Nevada, both population-wise and land base.</p> <p>12 I think it's really difficult to piece</p> <p>13 together a lot of this information because it's,</p> <p>14 even though we've been dealing with this for</p> <p>15 hundreds of years, nothing has changed. This</p> <p>16 consultation proves it.</p> <p>17 Like we've already heard, it was late, and</p> <p>18 I think it's very responsible for all the Tribal</p> <p>19 leaders here. We have to educate. That seems to be</p> <p>20 most of the job, is educating everybody because</p> <p>21 nobody understand what BIA does. All we did is see</p> <p>22 DOGE make all these cuts with a lack of basic</p> <p>23 understanding of how government works.</p> <p>24 We saw it every day since the</p> <p>25 administration came through and announced DOGE, but</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 48</p> <p>1 everything as you can possibly imagine, and people</p> <p>2 don't realize that.</p> <p>3 We were at NCAI a couple of months ago in</p> <p>4 Washington DC meeting with congressional leaders. I</p> <p>5 had the, I won't say pleasure, but we met with the</p> <p>6 Kentucky senator, one of the Kentucky senators, and</p> <p>7 they have no Reservations in Kentucky. How are they</p> <p>8 going to understand what we're talking about when we</p> <p>9 do BIA when they don't deal with it, ever.</p> <p>10 They're sitting there looking at the</p> <p>11 budgets, having to make these decisions when they</p> <p>12 don't have any Tribes. I believe the state of</p> <p>13 Georgia doesn't have any Tribes as well, and again,</p> <p>14 what would they know.</p> <p>15 They have to be educated on all of these</p> <p>16 things. I know a lot of you guys in your</p> <p>17 departments can advocate for more, but that really</p> <p>18 is what we need.</p> <p>19 So that's where it comes, you know. You</p> <p>20 can't consolidate something special like social</p> <p>21 services work into another department. That is</p> <p>22 highly technical specialized areas.</p> <p>23 I would not expect somebody that works in</p> <p>24 the IT department to be a social worker, and vice</p> <p>25 versa. It just doesn't happen that way. You have</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 47</p> <p>1 looking at some of these questions, the</p> <p>2 recommendations, efficiency, staffing changes, we</p> <p>3 just heard Mr. Mercier mention social services,</p> <p>4 that's one of the basic lack of understanding that I</p> <p>5 think that DOGE has of what BIA is responsible for.</p> <p>6 That trust and treaty responsibility.</p> <p>7 They don't understand that that doesn't just mean</p> <p>8 throwing money at Tribes, because every Tribe is</p> <p>9 different. That means that social services, some</p> <p>10 Tribes can handle their own through 638 funding like</p> <p>11 my Tribe. We do have our own 638 funding to handle</p> <p>12 that.</p> <p>13 Other Tribes do not have that critical</p> <p>14 necessity, and have to rely on BIA which is</p> <p>15 completely different, you know. You can't treat</p> <p>16 every Tribe, all 574 federally recognized Tribes as</p> <p>17 the same when we all have different needs,</p> <p>18 resources. We are all in different locations.</p> <p>19 One of the things that I always like to</p> <p>20 point out too is that when you look at the Tribes</p> <p>21 out west, most of these Tribes, you cannot say rural</p> <p>22 anymore. These are not rural Tribes. These are</p> <p>23 frontier Tribes.</p> <p>24 My cousins up in Alaska, these are</p> <p>25 frontier Tribes. They are as far away from</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 49</p> <p>1 to make sure that everything is flowing smoothly,</p> <p>2 and you cannot consolidate special areas like that.</p> <p>3 When it comes to better support, on the</p> <p>4 second question here, you know, better</p> <p>5 communication. We live in the golden age of</p> <p>6 communication now, the internet, cell phones, all of</p> <p>7 that.</p> <p>8 Many of our Tribes don't have cell phone</p> <p>9 coverage, internet coverage. We obviously need more</p> <p>10 funding for all of these things. I think everybody</p> <p>11 has seen the current budget proposals, and they're</p> <p>12 almost laughable in my opinion, because they'll say</p> <p>13 in one paragraph that they are making no cuts to the</p> <p>14 law enforcement programs. And then we look at the</p> <p>15 BIA budgets and they're cutting it by a third.</p> <p>16 Well, guess what's included in that BIA</p> <p>17 budget? Law enforcement. You can't have it both</p> <p>18 ways. If you say one thing and then you do the</p> <p>19 other, well everybody in this room knows that that's</p> <p>20 just the federal government bottom line.</p> <p>21 They say one thing and do the other. We</p> <p>22 need that time for change. We don't need a decrease</p> <p>23 in those budgets by a third. We need an increase by</p> <p>24 two-thirds, and that's probably lowballing.</p> <p>25 For this third one, we definitely, you've</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 50</p> <p>1 already heard, probably heard some, what was that 2 Monday you guys were in Alaska, just about fostering 3 economic growth and how you can do that, you know. 4 If we can remove some of these barriers to 5 give Tribes access to the funding faster, that of 6 course is going to be great, but the funding needs 7 to be there, you know. We have budget formulation 8 processes, and again, that's kind the one size is 9 going to try to fit all for all 574. It is not 10 going to work. I know that's -- that's almost an 11 impossible question because you're just dealing with 12 numbers, and numbers finite. 13 When it comes to the natural resources, so 14 if you're not familiar with Pyramid Lake, we have an 15 actual lake. It is the largest natural lake 16 completely in Nevada. My entire Reservation is 750 17 square miles, and 320 square miles of that is the 18 lake. It is a very large natural lake. 19 And doing something like this without that 20 proper commenting period, you know, we have our own 21 environmental assessment team. We have our own 22 natural resources building. You can't expect any of 23 these things to happen in the timeline. I don't 24 know what the quick turnaround is on my fellow 25 colleagues behind me about trying to schedule a</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 52</p> <p>1 Kooyooe Tukaddu. That literally translates to Fish 2 Eater. 3 We don't have a lot of fish eaters. The 4 Kooyooe is an endangered fish, so we don't fish it, 5 we don't eat it, except for maybe once a year when 6 we get a permit to actually pull out 200 of them 7 during the spawn. 8 But that's not what we do anymore. I 9 don't consider us Kooyooe eaters anymore. There is 10 no word for it, but we are Kooyooe protectors. 11 That's what we do day in and day out. 12 And it's not just the Reservation. We're 13 talking about an ecosystem that doesn't exist 14 entirely on the Reservation. This ecosystem 15 stretches from lake Tahoe through the Truckee River, 16 through the Reno/Sparks area, all the way to Pyramid 17 Lake. 18 So it's not enough just to say, you know, 19 do those executive orders on Tribes, because it is 20 not just the Tribe we have to deal with. It is the 21 City of Reno, the City of Sparks, the City of 22 Fernley with diversions off of the Truckee River. 23 It is one big ecosystem, and the time and everything 24 in that executive order just doesn't take any of 25 that into consideration.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 51</p> <p>1 council meeting to make some of these decisions 2 and/or having the staff work to try to get an EA 3 comment in. 4 It just, it does not happen quickly. Full 5 stop. It just doesn't. The same can be said for 6 RTPO, you know. We're fortunate enough in Nevada 7 where we have very large sections of our original 8 homelands. 9 And of course, like the Vice Chair woman 10 over here said, we also buy plots around us, and 11 part of that problem is that time that it takes to 12 get it into trust, which is a year's long process. 13 That definitely needs to be deregulated and, you 14 know, we need to get these things into trust faster. 15 Or, you know, mistakes are made. We just 16 found out about one just this last night. I had a 17 council meeting. We had something that we were 18 paying taxes on because it wasn't in trust. Turns 19 out it had been in trust since 2020 and there was 20 paperwork missing at BIA, so now our county that's 21 it in, Washoe County, has to pay us back back taxes 22 because it was in trust and nobody knew about it. 23 And then on top of that for when it comes 24 to also doing things on Tribal land, you know, 25 Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, our traditional name is</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 53</p> <p>1 Thank you. 2 BEN DUNCAN: I'd like to invite Vice Chair 3 Jack Music. And then after Jack, Kyle, we'll hear 4 from a couple folks online. 5 JACK MUSIC: I thank you for the 6 opportunity to be able to speak on behalf of my 7 Tribe. 8 My name is Jack Music, Vice Chairman for 9 the La Jolla Band of Indians. We are down in San 10 Diego County. We have a Tribe functioning about 900 11 and something members. Our land base is probably 12 about 12,000 acres. 13 We work, we have five elected officials 14 for our Tribal government, and we sat around the 15 table and we knew that we were going to be able to 16 consultate, consultation with the Bureau of Indian 17 Affairs, and we came up with some ideas that we are 18 willing and able to help if possible. 19 We can always find time for consultation 20 with the bureau. I have been on the Tribal council 21 probably over 25 to 28 years. As a young Tribal 22 council member growing up to be an adult senior 23 council member, and I've always had the opportunity 24 to be able to speak, and I always had the happy 25 opportunity to speak on behalf of my Tribe.</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 54</p> <p>1 I'm very proud. My mother taught me well. 2 I remember being a young chairman at I think 21 3 years old. I was gung-ho, I liked to speak, speak, 4 speak. And some of the Tribal elders in my area and 5 around the table, they said Jack, what you need to 6 do is listen, listen, listen. 7 And once you listen and learn, you'll be 8 able to speak. And I've done that. So I'm very 9 happy to be able to speak. 10 But on behalf of La Jolla, we wrote down 11 some general comments of opposition to funding and 12 staffing reductions. The impact on federal trust 13 responsibilities in essential services, historic and 14 legally binding relationships between the Tribe and 15 the Bureau of Indian Affairs' obligations to provide 16 adequate resources. 17 Impact of funding and staffing reductions, 18 chronic understanding and staffing shortages, 19 documentation of understanding and staff shortages 20 of the BIA through a long list of governmental 21 reports by the general administration office as well 22 as Congress. 23 Impact of increased workloads and limited 24 workforce. Indian self-determinate action needs 25 increased funding. Administration of federal</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 56</p> <p>1 federal partnerships. 2 In conclusion, opposition of further cuts, 3 emphasizes on the negative impact of further cuts. 4 Request for further comments and 5 consultation like I said, we're always willing to 6 sit down, five elected officials from our Tribe. 7 One of us are always willing to sit down in 8 consultation with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. 9 I've always had a great relationship with 10 the bureau. I want to continue that government to 11 government relationship, whatever takes place, and 12 always willing to do so. 13 And I thank you for these comments, and I 14 know I just would like to say in the 2025 self- 15 governance, you know, our funding has been paused 16 and still we have not received any funding for 2025 17 under the self-governance for the La Jolla Band. 18 We've been awarded a \$3.1 million bill 19 infrastructure for Tribal buildings to house 20 programs to promote economic development and vital 21 services like fire protection, training, and 22 educational. Also culture preservation. 23 The Tribal will work with the 24 administration to align with priorities as it will 25 implement this grant. We ask for your release of</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 55</p> <p>1 programs by Tribal governments. 2 Restructuring of Indian Affairs, our 3 recommendation would be opposition to reduction in 4 force or agency closures. Adequate staffing for 5 Tribal decision making, enhanced security measures, 6 resource allocations for IT and cyber security. 7 Process improvements through digital 8 solutions. Increased number of Tribal liaisons, 9 establish regional safety hubs, streamlining grant 10 applications, merging overlapping of public safety 11 programs. 12 Recommendations online database for VIA 13 grants, block grant funding model, proper funding 14 for education programs. Continued funding for 15 specific BIA offices, and simplify application 16 processes. 17 Increasing support for Tribal self- 18 governance. Recommendations allowing Tribes to 19 complete their own reviews and approvals. Support 20 for compliance with federal regulation. Strengthen 21 the workforce development. Flexibility and program 22 implementation. Economic growth initiatives. 23 Pathways to self-determination. Increase 24 federal funding for Tribal safety programs. 25 Flexibility and relocating federal funds. Expanding</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 57</p> <p>1 these funds as soon as possible, and ask for a 2 contact person on behalf of La Jolla that we can 3 make contact with on a one on one basis, where we 4 can make sure that this agreement is fulfilled. 5 KELLY RAE: We can talk after. I would 6 love to connect you. 7 JACK MUSIC: Okay. I appreciate that. 8 Thank you very much. 9 On behalf of La Jolla and the government 10 to government relationship, I thank you for this 11 opportunity to speak. Thank you very much. 12 BEN DUNCAN: Kyle, if we could invite our 13 first two online leaders. 14 KYLE VINT: Yeah, thank you for that, Ben. 15 I also just wanted to appreciate that we have 220 16 virtual attendees, so thank you everyone for making 17 the time to be with us today. 18 We have four folks with their hands 19 raised, and we'll work through that queue along the 20 way. 21 For our virtual attendees, when I call on 22 your name, you will receive a request to unmute 23 yourself so that you can participate virtually. 24 You are also able to turn on your camera 25 and we would be able to see you in the room as you</p>

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1 give your comment. It's not necessary, but it is
2 available to you should you want it.
3 I also want to remind folks who are
4 joining by phone, that you can use star 9 to raise
5 your hand. We have about 10 or 15 folks who have
6 joined us by phone, so you're also able to
7 participate. Star 9 will let us know that you'd
8 like to engage in the Tribal leader portion of our
9 consultation.
10 So I'm going to start with Buster
11 Attebery, and after Buster's comment we'll go to
12 Gerald James.
13 So Buster, you should be able to unmute
14 yourself now.
15 BUSTER ATTEBERY: Yes. Can you hear me?
16 KYLE VINT: Yes, we can.
17 BUSTER ATTEBERY: And I will -- now, can
18 you see me?
19 KYLE VINT: Yes.
20 BUSTER ATTEBERY: Okay. So (Native
21 language spoken). Hello, how are you? (Native
22 language spoken). I'm happy that everyone is here
23 today.
24 My name is Buster Attebery. I'm the Karuk
25 Tribal Chairman. The Karuk Tribe is located in the

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1 very northern part of California, just below the
2 Oregon border.
3 I hope that my comments will serve as some
4 recommendations to, I know that we're looking to
5 streamline the processes. President Trump has set
6 forward Executive Order 14210, and really is, we
7 want to respect the recommendation, and we want to,
8 I think Tribal leaders' job is to offer
9 recommendations on how we can make it better.
10 So, you know, I'll start with resource
11 sharing. If we could look into some noncompetitive
12 grant formulas rather than pitting Tribes against
13 Tribe.
14 We always think of this, there's a trust
15 responsibility out there. We need to let Tribes
16 report out on these deliverables rather than a lot
17 of the bureaucratic red tape that our federal
18 partners put forward.
19 Put a little trust in the Tribes to report
20 on those deliverables, and that would create less
21 work for our federal partners. An example of that
22 would be in our forestry.
23 Karuk Tribe is surrounded by federal
24 lands, forest lands, timber lands, and there's a
25 sustainable economy out there. We have a Karuk One

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1 Fire Crew. We have Forest Service crews.
2 Myself as Tribal Chairman, I used to be
3 able to sign the red cards. When our Fire Crew went
4 out and did their necessary training to become
5 qualified, I could sign off their red cards.
6 Now they have to be sent down to our BIA
7 office in Sacramento. That should be streamlined to
8 let myself as a Tribal leader up here, we know how
9 to do the training. We know how to manage these
10 lands up here.
11 It's been proven for thousands of years.
12 You heard it numerous times. So we should be
13 allowed to sign those red cards. Again, creating a
14 way for less work for the Sacramento region BIA
15 office.
16 Consolidation of programs. The Karuk
17 Tribe just recently sent out a press release, and
18 it's the first California Tribe to receive federal
19 approval for 102-477 self-sufficiently plan.
20 This plan consolidates programs from BIA,
21 Department of Health and Human Services, DOJ, and
22 this allows Tribes and our federal partners to
23 streamline services. This is a process that would
24 integrate education, job training, youth services,
25 culture engagement, child care, and the basic needs

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1 that support a culturally grounded delivery service.
2 So we're really excited about this 477
3 program and how it consolidates together all these
4 different programs, and we can draw funding from
5 programs to enhance all the programs.
6 Education. I'm one of the Pacific region
7 representatives for TIBC. I think we want to look
8 into some more funding for higher education that
9 would allow Tribes to allow our students to go to
10 school to become teachers.
11 We struggle mightily to get providers. I
12 know a lot of people do, but we're in these rural
13 areas. Sometimes we get doctors that love to fish
14 or hunt and want to come to these areas but the wife
15 says no, so we struggle with getting providers out
16 here, and teachers.
17 So I know there's a moratorium on Tribally
18 controlled schools, and probably rightfully so. The
19 funding construction of our BIA schools is rolling
20 around to refurbishing a lot of these schools
21 because of the time frame that when they were built,
22 and that's where a lot of that money goes.
23 But we have an opportunity in some places.
24 I know we do out here with the Karuk Tribe, to
25 partner with the school districts out here, where

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1 they are lacking funds. So the school here where I
2 went to school in Happy Camp, California, which is
3 headquarters for the Karuk Tribe, they've offered
4 their school.
5 So we have facilities already built, and
6 they are offering to help subsidize salaries,
7 combine what we can get with the BIA or BIE schools,
8 and in those instances if we could lift that
9 moratorium and get a Tribally controlled school,
10 which you wouldn't have to put out a lot of funds if
11 we had the combination of working with the public
12 school system.
13 On our natural resources, you heard Washoe
14 Chairman Smokey comment on there's a sustainable
15 economy out there in our forests. We truly believe
16 that there is a sustainable economy if it's shaped
17 through the management of our forests by the use of
18 Tribal ecological knowledge.
19 We all know, as we have said, that Tribe
20 managed these lands since time immemorial in these
21 forested areas. And there was a sustainable economy
22 for 50 years up here, but in the Tribe here, just
23 what Chairman said. We weren't against logging. We
24 were against the way it was being done.
25 The clear cutting, when they built the

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1 roads to go into get the logs, they covered over the
2 creeks and streams that fed our rivers. We won't do
3 that. There is a sustainable economy, but you have
4 to take care of the ecology first.
5 The approach from them was the economy
6 first. They went after, quote, the money trees.
7 That won't happen with a management process that
8 would be sustainable. And I won't go into all the
9 details of that, but the Tribes have known how to
10 manage these lands, and we've heard the U.S. Forest
11 Service just recently testify.
12 I met with former Chief Randy Moore
13 through the United States Forest Service, and he
14 said straight out, he said, we need to listen to
15 what the Tribes have to say. They have managed
16 these lands for centuries. We need to learn from
17 them.
18 So there is a sustainable economy out
19 there if we use ecology first and then the economy
20 will follow.
21 On the staffing, if the department is
22 deeply committed to strengthening Tribal efficiency
23 and self-determination, it must enhance to
24 adequately staff the office that most directly
25 facilitates Tribal engagement in the exercise of

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1 Tribal self-governance.
2 This improvement would not only strengthen
3 the department's partnership with Tribes, but it
4 would also enhance the speed and consistency with
5 which funding and technical support are made
6 available to Tribal governments.
7 Health and human services. California is
8 home to more Tribes than any other state in the
9 nation, and yet we receive barely 6 percent of the
10 funding through IHS.
11 And we need more Tribal facilities out in
12 this area. So with that being said, I think that we
13 respect the need to balance the budget. We respect
14 the need to make some cuts somewhere, but it
15 shouldn't be in Indian country.
16 Again, when we get back to the trust
17 responsibility, it's in the constitution. It's in
18 statutes, and if we want to look for cuts, the
19 amount of money we give to foreign aid, the Tribes'
20 last count, and according to the TIBC reports, is
21 less than one-tenth of one percent what goes out to
22 foreign aid.
23 And guess what, foreign countries are not
24 going to make America great again, but Tribes can.
25 So I thank you for your time. I apologize

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1 for not being there. I have to tend some Tribal
2 member funeral services early in the morning, and
3 otherwise I would have been there.
4 Thank you, everybody, for the time.
5 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.
6 KYLE VINT: And we'll go next to Gerald
7 James. Gerald, you should have the ability to
8 unmute yourself and turn on your camera, should you
9 like to.
10 GERALD JAMES: Good morning. I won't
11 spend a lot of time on our individual issues.
12 We'll send in written comments to this.
13 I'm a bit saddened that we don't have a northwest
14 area consultation scheduled anywhere, and if there
15 is one that gets scheduled, it will likely be too
16 late to address anything.
17 But I see we have our respected Chair of
18 Suquamish and Chair of our ATNI there, and you will
19 likely have comments, I hope.
20 I would just like to address that we have
21 opportunity here. I think some of the ideas that
22 the administration has, we support and have
23 supported since the beginning of self-governance,
24 but some of what's going on here is basically anti-
25 self-governance.

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 66</p> <p>1 DOGE is telling you what, how much needs 2 to be cut, and now we're doing the consultation to 3 figure out, how do we help cut what's already not 4 enough to address the treaty obligations of the 5 United States and the trust responsibility of the 6 United States aren't being adequately addressed now, 7 let alone what is being proposed to cut. 8 So I would encourage us to be working. We 9 had a discussion with Bryan at ATNI last week about 10 that five out of the first 10 Tribes in self- 11 governance were from ATNI member Tribes, not from 12 ATNI specifically but that's out of the northwest. 13 We do have ideas on how things can be made 14 better, but there has got to be collaboration. We 15 always hear, oh, we respect your treaty rights and 16 we know what our trust responsibility is. When no, 17 you don't. 18 So the words mean nothing. The action, I 19 mean, we're setting in the northwest as fishing 20 Tribes that depend on fishing for our economy, has 21 been destroyed by the policies of the United States 22 and of the states. 23 And there's been little to nothing being 24 done to address those issues by the federal 25 government, not just the BIA but the NOAA, EPA,</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 68</p> <p>1 land, which are treaties. 2 And with the inactivity of the federal 3 government as a whole, has allowed our people to to 4 starve, and that's wrong. We can talk about 5 building an economy. Well, our economy is fish. 6 So I just encourage us to if figure out 7 what is our relationship going to be when we grow 8 up. What is the ultimate trust responsibility of 9 the United States to bring the Indian Tribes up to 10 the level that they're supposed to. 11 Where is the accountability. Where is the 12 measurements. Where is the metrics of how things 13 are getting better. If we can't sit down and decide 14 what better is, what the ultimate responsibility is, 15 then all of us get to sit around these tables and 16 justify what we did and how much money we spent 17 while our people are starving, don't have an 18 economy, have housing or no housing, or overcrowded 19 housing because they can't afford the rent or to buy 20 a home, or because the waters of the United States 21 now prevent us from being able to build on any 22 wetlands. 23 And that's what our Reservation is. The 24 majority of us in Western Washington have very small 25 Reservations because our ability to go out when</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 67</p> <p>1 ecology or ESA issues. 2 They're not being addressed. Marine 3 Mammal Protection Act is in direct conflict and 4 being administered by NOAA. One, NOAA is supposed 5 to be addressing ESA, Endangered Species Act on 6 salmon that are listed, and also have the 7 responsibility for the Marine Mammal Protection Act 8 which is a major contributor to the decline of 9 salmon. 10 Yet nothing is being done to address those 11 things. So there has to be some balance and some 12 recognition of what the real treaty obligations are 13 and what the trust responsibility of the federal 14 government is across all of its agencies, not just 15 BIA or Interior, but all of them. 16 So it's something that never gets 17 addressed because we want to stick our nose into the 18 gear works of how something is being done instead of 19 what needs to be done. It's not about what we can 20 do, but what should be being done. 21 And we never get to what should be being 22 done. It's always about, well, jeez, well the 23 budget got cut, or we don't have staffing, or jeez, 24 we don't have the legal authority, or there's always 25 a reason why not to enforce the supreme law of the</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 69</p> <p>1 spring came, go out amongst the islands and fish and 2 hunt and provide for ourselves, and I'll remind you 3 with this last statement. 4 In 1917 the Indian agent at Tulalip 5 writing to the Secretary of War, stating, I must 6 admit the Lumi people are cocky, self-sufficient, 7 and most intractable of all our Indians. 8 We're still intractable, we're still 9 cocky. Our ability to be self-sufficient has been 10 almost stripped away from us. So where is the 11 federal government's trust responsibility to uphold 12 our ability to be self-sufficient if they've allowed 13 to have our resources destroyed, and I don't want to 14 hear, oh, well, that was climate change. 15 Because that climate change has compounded 16 the problem that the federal government and state 17 governments have done to destroy the environment 18 that the very fish we depend upon need to survive 19 and thrive. 20 (Native language spoken). 21 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you. We're going back 22 to the room, if I could invite President Mike Jones. 23 MIKE JONES: Hello, thank you. (Native 24 language spoken) is my Haida name. My name is Mike 25 Jones. I am the Tribal President in Kasaan, Alaska.</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 70</p> <p>1 To the local Tribal leaders, I'm honored</p> <p>2 to be on your land and share this space with you,</p> <p>3 and to stand with you.</p> <p>4 Quick statement. The United States</p> <p>5 government must fundamentally transform its approach</p> <p>6 to Tribal Nations by recognizing and fully</p> <p>7 implementing its trust and treaty responsibilities.</p> <p>8 This requires a paradigm shift of</p> <p>9 paternalistic oversight to genuine government to</p> <p>10 government consultation that respects Tribal</p> <p>11 sovereignty. Meaningful consultation is not a</p> <p>12 bureaucratic check box, but a constitutional and</p> <p>13 moral obligation that demands comprehensive, timely,</p> <p>14 and substantive engagement.</p> <p>15 Tribes must be equal partners in decision</p> <p>16 making process affecting their lands, resources, and</p> <p>17 communities with sufficient time, resources, and</p> <p>18 platforms to provide input. The federal government</p> <p>19 must move beyond superficial interactions such as 7</p> <p>20 to 14-day comment periods.</p> <p>21 When I first read that, I thought it was a</p> <p>22 typo, 7 to 14-day comment period. I don't know how</p> <p>23 you can work with that.</p> <p>24 And create robust mechanisms that</p> <p>25 integrate Indigenous knowledge, support self-</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 72</p> <p>1 3. Self-governance expansion.</p> <p>2 Objective: Expand Tribal contracting and</p> <p>3 self-determination opportunities.</p> <p>4 Examples: Allow Tribes to contract</p> <p>5 directly with National Park Service for Visitor</p> <p>6 Center management. Expand Tribal contracts with EPA</p> <p>7 for environmental monitoring. Allow Tribes to</p> <p>8 manage their own health care administration across</p> <p>9 federal agencies.</p> <p>10 4. Reduce administrative burdens.</p> <p>11 Objective: Simplify reporting</p> <p>12 requirements and recognize Tribal governance.</p> <p>13 Examples: Accept single-audit reports as</p> <p>14 sufficient documentation. Reduce monthly reporting</p> <p>15 to quarterly. Eliminate Davis-Bacon wage</p> <p>16 requirements for small Tribes' infrastructure</p> <p>17 projects.</p> <p>18 5. Meaningful Consultation.</p> <p>19 Objective: Provide genuine comprehensive</p> <p>20 Consultation processes.</p> <p>21 Example: Provide draft NEPA environmental</p> <p>22 assessment 60 days before comment period. Translate</p> <p>23 consultation documents into Native languages. Allow</p> <p>24 sufficient time for Tribal input, not 7 to 14-day</p> <p>25 windows.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 71</p> <p>1 determination, and provide direct predictable</p> <p>2 funding.</p> <p>3 By honoring these principles, the United</p> <p>4 States can begin to repair historical injustices and</p> <p>5 create a collaborative framework that truly reflects</p> <p>6 the nation to nation relationship promised in</p> <p>7 treaties and affirmed by federal law.</p> <p>8 Key policy objectives and concrete</p> <p>9 examples.</p> <p>10 1. Direct funding.</p> <p>11 The objective: Provide direct allocations</p> <p>12 to Tribes by bypassing state intermediaries.</p> <p>13 Examples: Guarantee a \$300,000 base</p> <p>14 allocation directly to small Tribes instead of a</p> <p>15 competitive \$50,000 grant. Eliminate state level</p> <p>16 intermediaries for USDA or HUD grants. Provide</p> <p>17 advanced predictable funding mechanisms.</p> <p>18 2. Land and economic sovereignty.</p> <p>19 Objective: Streamline land into trust</p> <p>20 processes, and support Tribal economic development.</p> <p>21 Examples: Expedite all Tribes' land into</p> <p>22 trust applications within reasonable time frame.</p> <p>23 Reduce land transfer legal costs from \$250,000 to</p> <p>24 25,000. Allow Tribes to develop economic projects</p> <p>25 on trust lands without additional state approvals.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 73</p> <p>1 6. Funding equity.</p> <p>2 Objective: Increase funding for Tribal</p> <p>3 administrative capacities.</p> <p>4 Example: Increase Tribal priority</p> <p>5 allocation from 500,000 to a million.</p> <p>6 I just want to comment briefly and speak</p> <p>7 from my heart that I'm here to represent people in</p> <p>8 my village that have to make a decision between</p> <p>9 internet and feeding their kids. We have</p> <p>10 generational wealth that came out of our bay. It</p> <p>11 was once a capital. The salmon capital of the world</p> <p>12 was in our territory, and yet our people are</p> <p>13 struggling to get by.</p> <p>14 I'm hearing about mining operations going</p> <p>15 on in some of the territories down here. How much</p> <p>16 of you that benefits the people? We have</p> <p>17 transboundary mining situations in Alaska where the</p> <p>18 mines in Canada are leaking their toxins into our</p> <p>19 waters.</p> <p>20 We have elders in our village that, to do</p> <p>21 house maintenance and include a wheelchair ramp, we</p> <p>22 drive steps in to help with those things, but it</p> <p>23 comes out of our general fund.</p> <p>24 We need more help with these things. We</p> <p>25 have the opioid epidemic that's going on all over</p>

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1 the place, and everybody has seen it and we've lost
2 so many young people. And to me, to be told that we
3 have the most powerful military the world has ever
4 seen but we just can't keep the drugs out of our
5 villages, that is not a believable story to me.
6 I think it's being allowed to happen, and
7 we need resources to combat that and to help pick
8 these people back up. They need us. We have a lot
9 of people counting on us.
10 So again, I'm honored to be here.
11 (Native language spoken). Thank you.
12 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you, President.
13 Invite Vice President Clinton Cook.
14 CLINTON COOK: Good morning. Before I
15 start, I'd like to recognize the federally
16 recognized Tribes of the Rancheria and the other
17 Indigenous peoples of Sacramento for allowing us to
18 speak on your land. (Native language spoken).
19 And also I'd like to thank you for the
20 upgraded venue. I was in Alaska where they stuck us
21 in a cafeteria. I know people are smiling, but it's
22 not funny to me.
23 I've looked at the boarding school
24 pictures. That looked just like boarding schools
25 from the past. You should have done better in your

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1 venue.
2 Today I'm here to represent Tlingit and
3 Haida Central Council Indian Tribes of Alaska. I
4 also speak as the Tribal President of the Craig
5 Tribal Association on the West Coast, the Prince of
6 Wales Island in Southeast Alaska where every day we
7 exercise sovereignty, not because federal systems
8 made it easy, but because our people require it.
9 Self-governance isn't a future goal to us.
10 It's our reality. Efficiency doesn't mean less
11 government. It means the the right government.
12 Let's be honest. We're cleaning up after the
13 federal efficiency.
14 When 105(1) leases or Tribal probates are
15 delayed for years, that's just not an inconvenience
16 to Tribes. It's a breakdown in basic trust. If
17 Tribes are late in audits, 425s, we would lose
18 funding. When the federal government loses this
19 breakdown, we're just simply told to wait.
20 If the department wants to fix these
21 problems, sign multi-year 105(1) lease agreements,
22 indexed annually with inflation. Let Tribes process
23 the leases with BIA providing only the review and
24 final signatures.
25 Don't close Alaska field offices or reduce

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1 them. We need more staff, more follow-through, not
2 more consolidation.
3 The greatest inefficiencies in Indian
4 country are not caused by the local Tribes. They
5 are caused by rigid bureaucratic federal funding
6 systems that delay access, restrict flexibility, and
7 impose duplicative requirements on Tribal
8 governments.
9 We deliver programs, manage compliance,
10 complete audits, and yet we're made to chase down
11 funding through portals, duplicate reports, and
12 grants that always favor the bigger players in the
13 game.
14 Here's what real partnership looks like.
15 Substantially increased Tribal priority allocation,
16 aid to Tribal government and the small Tribe
17 supplements.
18 Provide direct advanced funding, not pass-
19 through funds we wait months and years for. Fully
20 reimburse indirect cost rates. We shouldn't be
21 subsidizing the work of the federal government.
22 Land into trust, stop making sovereignty a
23 legal obstacle for Tribes. As the Tribal president
24 in Craig in 2017, we put land in a trust. One of
25 very few Tribes that have accomplished this goal,

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1 but it took years and tens of thousands of dollars.
2 Is the department serious about economic
3 development with Tribes? Then make the process
4 easier for us to put more lands in a trust and
5 streamline the process.
6 In closing, I'd like to say that Tribes
7 are already doing the work. Tlingit and Haida and
8 all Tribal Nations are already self-governing. We
9 build our own systems, reduce dependency, and
10 deliver results, but we're doing it despite the
11 system, not because of it.
12 Honor the trust responsibilities. Respect
13 our sovereignty, and move the barriers that keep us
14 from true self-determination.
15 I'd like to reiterate earlier Tribal
16 leader's remarks about the 2025 monies not showing
17 up. The same emails I got from our funders.
18 Treasury hasn't sent the release of money to us.
19 You're nine months late. That's not okay.
20 I'd also like to talk about Indian community
21 development block grants that are going to get
22 chopped. We live in Southeast Alaska. Another
23 leader called it frontier. We call it rural.
24 The price to build a home where I live
25 exceeds \$500 a square foot. When shipping a package

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 78</p> <p>1 from Seattle to Alaska costs upwards of \$50,000 just 2 in shipping. You can't leave the house at the flat 3 rate like every Tribe is the same. 4 Make us who we are, single Tribes, and 5 respect us and how we have to live and where we 6 live. 7 Another leader talked about fishing. We 8 all need it to live on in Alaska, and it's not there 9 no more. And the drill baby drill, in our country 10 is going to be log baby log. We don't want clearcut 11 logging. It's a thing of the past. 12 It's ruined our streams, ruined our 13 forests, ruined our deer habitat. We have nothing 14 left because the log scale, old growth logging. The 15 old growth must remain there for future generations. 16 Thank you. 17 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you. 18 BRYAN MERCIER: Ben, can you hold? 19 BEN DUNCAN: Yeah, sorry. 20 BRYAN MERCIER: I just want to, Vice 21 President Cook, I just wanted to say that part of 22 the reason we're having the dialogue today is 23 yesterday we saved our comments until the very end. 24 After seven and a half hours there weren't many 25 Tribal leaders left in the room.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 80</p> <p>1 is it Vivanco? 2 ISAIAH VIVANCO: Good afternoon. Well, 3 actually good morning everybody. My name is Isaiah 4 Vivanco. I'm the Chairman for the Soboba Band of 5 Luiseno Indians located in Southern California. We 6 reside on about 8,000 acres held in trust by the 7 federal government, servicing about 1,700 Tribal 8 citizens of our own community. 9 It's growing more and more difficult, and 10 we are going to present our written comments to the 11 issues at hand, but I wanted to speak kind of from 12 my heart today so you all could hear what we have to 13 say on the issues that are present. 14 A lot of the effects of the executive 15 orders are having huge impacts on our communities 16 today and now as we speak. 17 We are a community of 1,700 as I mentioned 18 earlier, and the services that we provide to our 19 membership, we need the help. The very resources 20 that are talked about today about being cut and 21 reduced in size are the ones that we need. 22 They're essential to our Tribal 23 governments. Not just our community, but others 24 around the state and the country. 25 And when we talk about reduction in</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 79</p> <p>1 But the reason we were at that venue is we 2 had a nice federal venue set up that had to cancel a 3 week prior, so Alaska Pacific university was the 4 only venue that could accommodate us on short 5 notice. 6 So we did apologize for that, because the 7 venue we had fell through due to the Zoom 8 technology. They couldn't host us. So we were 9 scrambling to find what we could, and that's why it 10 was such a poor venue. 11 We admit, and apologize for that, but I 12 wanted -- the reason I was smiling was because we 13 had, we addressed it but nobody was there, and it 14 was unfortunate that we missed everybody. 15 And that's why we want to have this 16 dialogue now so folks, if they do need to leave 17 early, can hear from us directly. 18 CLINTON COOK: Well, thank you for that, 19 and thank you for saying that you no technology to 20 produce it, because that's what it's like up there 21 sometimes. 22 It's just not there. 23 Thank you. 24 BRYAN MERCIER: Absolutely. Thank you. 25 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you. Chairman Isaiah,</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 81</p> <p>1 forces, and those very services that are helping us 2 grow our communities and sustain livable standards, 3 it's been difficult. And I think it's important for 4 the Department of Interior to understand that. 5 We look to you guys to be our trustees and 6 adhering to the trust responsibilities and treaty 7 responsibilities that was done years and years, 8 decades ago. 9 And here we are today talking about, your 10 opening statement was, Secretary Burgum, let's 11 identify the issue and work on solutions. 12 The issue has been identified for decades 13 and years ago. You can go back to many 14 consultations and look at what Tribes have said, and 15 it's the reduction. It's not even supplying the 16 needed resources, the adequate funding for IHS, for 17 infrastructure, for BIE. 18 We are one of the only Tribes in 19 California or the West Coast that have a BIE funded 20 school. We are looking at closure now because of 21 what has been going on. 22 We are looking at closure because we have 23 to sustain some of the costs of that school, and in 24 order to do that, it comes from our Tribal 25 resources. Resources that need to go to other</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 82</p> <p>1 health care issues that our funding, we're 2 subsidizing because of inadequate funding for IHS. 3 So when we look at the reduction of force 4 and what is happening today, we have to look at in 5 the past and what's been asked of. It's always been 6 asked that we need more funding. 7 The Chairman earlier mentioned, we don't 8 need to reduce the funding or the cuts by one-third, 9 we need to increase it by two-thirds. That is 10 something that's real. That is something that's 11 real in our communities, and we see it. 12 Our community alone has grown at a rate of 13 seven times that the national average. That's just 14 our community. We have that kind of growth up and 15 down the State of California, and we think that that 16 needs to be looked at when we talk about reduction. 17 I think it's very important to make sure 18 that we are efficient, that we are working within 19 our means, that's great, but you can't reduce 20 something that's in need of fixing. Need of funds, 21 and need of support and help to continue to make 22 sure our communities are safe. 23 We're working on projects right now to 24 bring necessary housing to our Reservation, to our 25 homelands, with the support of government IHS,</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 84</p> <p>1 introduction of all of you sitting up here, and I 2 don't see anybody from DOGE. Are any of you guys 3 decision makers? And what is being said today, are 4 you going to take that back? Or is it going to be 5 taken back? Or are we just at the end of the table 6 and maybe just checking a box to say that we've done 7 the consultation. 8 Because we had hoped this consultation 9 would have happened probably prior to these 10 executive orders taking place. It's unfortunate 11 that we're here today having to do this backwards. 12 But I do hope that this information gets 13 back to those that are in a position to make those 14 changes, or even look at what's going to be the best 15 need going forward for our communities, because it 16 is up to you guys, our trustees, to make sure that 17 that happens. 18 Like I mentioned, we will submit written 19 comments more specifically to everything that's been 20 asked, but I did want to speak today from the heart 21 on what's being impacted today on our home land. 22 So with that, thank you guys for being 23 here. Thank you for having us. Thank you for all 24 the other Tribal leaders for being here, and we hope 25 to hear from you.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 83</p> <p>1 things of that nature. 2 Infrastructure that is highly needed in 3 order for us to service our members, bring homes, 4 bring our membership back to their home lands so 5 they can live amongst their community as we should. 6 And we struggle with that today because 7 those resources may be gone tomorrow. We started a 8 project a year and a half ago to bring two megawatts 9 of solar to our home lands to offset the growing 10 cost of energy. 11 With the assurances that we were going to 12 be receiving half of those funds back through grants 13 through incentives through the federal government. 14 We looked, and today we're ready to flip the switch 15 and turn those solar panels on, but now having the 16 Tribe paid money out of their own pocket, are not 17 assured those resources back. 18 Resources that are highly needed to 19 increase the support and all the programs that we 20 offer to our members. 21 So, you know, we're not against efficiency 22 as we mentioned. You'll hear it today and today 23 again, in every consultation that you guys go to, 24 but we need to look at what happens happening. 25 I look up here and I listened to the</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 85</p> <p>1 BRYAN MERCIER: Thank you, sir, because 2 this actually was a topic that came up a lot in 3 Alaska and we couldn't get to it because we waited 4 until the end. 5 So I want to address the questions about 6 what happens next with these consultations, because 7 it was -- in Alaska we heard that a lot too, that 8 folks were uncertain whether this was just a check- 9 the-box exercise, or what's going to happen with 10 these comments. 11 So everything here is being recorded, and 12 over the course of the next three weeks as we have 13 these in-person and one virtual consultation 14 sessions, the information from that are going to be 15 compiled. 16 Oliver Whaley, where is Oliver at? He's 17 on our team. He wants to raise his hand, he's over 18 here. So his team is going to be compiling much of 19 that, while we then open up a 30-day written comment 20 period for you all to submit further comment that 21 you weren't able to submit here in person or online. 22 And all of that will be compiled, and we 23 will be taking this information to the decision 24 makers of how to implement, and whether to implement 25 these executive orders and secretarial orders.</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 86</p> <p>1 So that is the process by which it will 2 occur. And we have assurances, nobody here is from 3 DOGE. Nobody here is the ultimate decision maker, 4 but we have access to those decision makers, and 5 we'll be there as we advise them to consider this 6 consultation. 7 And they have been very responsive so far. 8 As I mentioned earlier, some top-down decisions came 9 down and we were able to reverse those after our 10 political team joined, and we were, kind of educated 11 them on the uniqueness and the difference in Indian 12 country. 13 So we feel, I feel pretty confident that 14 this is a serious consultation that they're going to 15 listen to. 16 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you. 17 Chairman Leonard Forsman. 18 CHAIRMAN LEONARD FORSMAN: Good morning. 19 I was not here just because I was sitting next to 20 the mic. Lighten it up a little bit here, but it's 21 a serious issue. 22 I'm Leonard Forsman, Chairman of the 23 Suquamish Tribe, home of Chief Seattle and located 24 in Central Puget Sound and Fort Madison Indian 25 Reservation, which was established by the Treaty of</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 88</p> <p>1 president of that great organization. 2 And of course, we have expressed our 3 disappointment, there hasn't been a Northwest 4 consultation, and I know that we're hoping that that 5 happens, because we have over 50-some Tribes as 6 parts of ATNI, and we're mainly in Washington, 7 Oregon, and Idaho but we also include Alaska, 8 Montana, and California and other states. 9 We're really united around salmon. You 10 hear a lot of about salmon, but the salmon are 11 caught on the coast, they're caught in the sea, 12 they're caught on the Columbia River, the Snake 13 River, et cetera. 14 So we're really tied around that and it's 15 an important part of our identity, our cultural 16 identity and our spirituality. 17 And one of the great things about ATNI is 18 our commitment to our traditions. And our 19 traditions are tied around our landscape and our 20 place names and our ceremonies. 21 And I really appreciate Scott Davis coming 22 out too, and Bryan coming out to ATNI that was held 23 near Spokane, and participating in our cultural 24 night and the ceremonies and having you all there. 25 It's an important part of our relationship</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 87</p> <p>1 Point Elliott in 1855. 2 You heard from James earlier from Lummi 3 Nation that their Tribe was also present at that 4 treaty that we signed with Governor Stevens. 5 And one thing that was interesting, we 6 found a document a year after the treaty was signed 7 where the Indian agent came to our Reservation and 8 talked to Chief Seattle, and he asked him, they 9 asked what their needs were. And he said, why isn't 10 our treaty ratified yet? 11 And I just wanted to make, and he also 12 asked for a school. He says, where's our school? 13 And he meant for a school on the Reservation, not a 14 boarding school, so I think that those are two top 15 of the line things that he had in mind a year after 16 the treaty was signed. 17 And it's also important to remember that 18 Congress has a role in this as well. And our treaty 19 was ratified by Congress, and it's important to 20 impress upon the administration to work with 21 Congress on their trust and treaty responsibility to 22 Indian Tribes. 23 I'm also President of the Affiliated 24 Tribes of Northwest Indians. I've been the 25 president since 2017. It's a great honor to be the</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 89</p> <p>1 with the federal government, that is sacred, and I 2 think it's important that it not just be thrown in 3 to a budget cutting DOGE initiative. 4 And I appreciate you guys pushing back and 5 being able to save some of this, but the Tribes are 6 already underfunded and I know Bryan has been trying 7 to recruit people to come help with probate in the 8 past because we've been understaffed. 9 And we really want to make sure that the 10 people want to come to work for the federal 11 government and do the right things, and be efficient 12 and do what the Tribes -- meet the Tribes' 13 priorities, but it's kind of right now, doesn't seem 14 like the best place to work. 15 So we want to work on making sure that 16 people are welcome to come in and do this work 17 that's important, an important part of the federal 18 government's responsibilities. 19 Our Tribe is across from Seattle, as I 20 said, and we're on a checkerboard Reservation. Our 21 Reservation was allotted in 1886, and a lot of that 22 land has gone out of trust. 23 We've been able to re-acquire a lot of 24 land, but there are two communities, the Suquamish 25 in Indianola that are part of our Reservation, and</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 90</p> <p>1 we're outnumbered about 11 to one on our 2 Reservation, but over time through the work, our 3 government to government work with the county, with 4 the cities, with the federal government, with the 5 state we have become a real regional economy, local 6 economy, and a leader both politically and 7 culturally, socially, and economically through those 8 collaborations. 9 And we think the same collaborations can 10 continue, and it's important for us to work on a 11 government to government basis, as we have for so 12 long. 13 I've been on council for, I was on council 14 for 15 years before I became chairman in '05, and 15 I've been chairman ever since, so I'm getting up 16 there in my experience. 17 I just wanted to kind of keep these kind 18 of brief, because I know a lot of other people want 19 to speak. And I appreciate all previous speakers. 20 We just want to make sure that this is 21 meaningful consultation, that decisions haven't been 22 made. And I'm hearing that that's the case, and I 23 really hope that's the case, that the cake isn't 24 already baked. 25 Because, you know, we're kind of skeptical</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 92</p> <p>1 efficiently implement your responsibilities. 2 And then just in general, I just want to 3 join in on the discussion around NEPA and Section 4 106. I'm an archeologist by training. 5 I understand the frustration that can 6 happen with permitting, and I think there's a 7 balance to be had there. Seven days is just really 8 not even realistic. As you know, who gets anything 9 done in seven days? 10 So the fact that you got seven days' 11 notice on your meeting request, this was probably a 12 little time, fast turnaround. For us to get the 13 seven-day notice on a project that might affect our 14 treaty resources, our fishing, our shellfishing, our 15 crabbing, all of those things that are guaranteed in 16 our treaty is not fair. 17 Treaty resources are a part of our 18 economy. It was said earlier, and I don't think 19 polluted water, polluted air, clearcut forests are 20 good for the economy long term. 21 It's a short term vision, and we really 22 need to work on a sustainable model for how we can 23 work together, with the Tribes, understanding that 24 we have to have an economy. We have a robust 25 economy ourselves. A lot of Tribes are engaged in</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 91</p> <p>1 sometimes, so you guys can understand. We have our 2 reasons to be skeptical of the federal government, 3 but a lot of the talk was about, we want efficiency 4 too. 5 I think there's been ways that we could 6 have improved over time, and I think the self- 7 governance Tribes have demonstrated that, that we're 8 able to take on some of these programs ourselves and 9 run them within our Reservations, building on 10 President Nixon's, President Ford's Self- 11 Determination Act, President Bush's Self-Governance 12 Act. 13 Some of those things have been implemented 14 and can show how Tribes can take on a lot of these 15 responsibilities. 16 I think we can improve the payment system. 17 Right now we don't have enough people to process the 18 payments, and I think that sometimes, when I saw 19 your slides, they don't seem compatible, because 20 it's like, slash the budget but improve the trust 21 responsibility and our effectiveness. 22 So there's a balance there that I think 23 that we need to really work for. And the Progress 24 Act is one place where you could lean into, because 25 that's a model for how we can better, more</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 93</p> <p>1 timber harvesting, like we said earlier as well. 2 So to have that work done cooperatively in 3 a more efficient manner and a more robust manner, 4 talking with each other would be great. 5 And just want to add on in closing that 6 the issues around probate are essential for 7 Northwest. Bryan, appreciate the work you've done 8 on the realty end over the years, trying to make 9 that more efficient because that really ties up a 10 lot of our Tribes' ability to put land into trust to 11 acquire mortgages, get people in homes. 12 Because we do have a great, an extreme 13 housing crisis, and then also on law enforcement. 14 We provide law enforcement for the entire 15 Reservation. Work cooperatively with the county and 16 city police departments as well. 17 We provide police services. A lot of non- 18 Indians on our Reservation. We have to do that to 19 keep the public safe, so the more investment in that 20 and our courts is also key. 21 So once again on behalf of the Suquamish 22 Tribe, I'd like to thank you. (Native language 23 spoken). 24 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you, Chairman. 25 I'm going to invite folks, leaders online.</p>

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1 KYLE VINT: We've got two folks with hands
2 raised online. We're going to go first to Curtis
3 LaChusa, Chairman Curtis LaChusa followed by Joel
4 Jackson.
5 Chairman LaChusa, you should have the
6 ability to unmute yourself now, and also come on
7 video.
8 CHAIRMAN CURTIS LACHUSA: Hello, can you
9 hear me?
10 KYLE VINT: Yes, we can.
11 CHAIRMAN CURTIS LACHUSA: Good morning.
12 Good morning. I'm not going to inflict you with my
13 camera, for I am an ugly man, so good morning.
14 Good morning to all the Tribal leaders out
15 there. You showed real leadership showing up for
16 your people today, speaking on behalf of them.
17 And good morning to all you panelists. I
18 don't envy your job there. This is a big
19 undertaking in what you're doing, and you're getting
20 a taste of what the regional people go through every
21 day in your offices and all your departments.
22 Every one of these Tribes, we're all
23 unique, but it's a government to government dialogue
24 that you're engaged in right now, and some very,
25 very serious issues for each one of these Tribes has

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1 come up and being discussed today.
2 And everybody wants a good outcome with
3 these issues. There is nothing here that is fatal,
4 that can't be worked through, but it takes
5 communication, and that's the most efficient way to
6 do things is to be able to communicate.
7 I'm the Chairman of Mesa Grande. We're a
8 Tribe down in Southern California, and we made
9 several in-person to the regional offices of the BIA
10 to explain some of our personal issues and things
11 that we're going through, and found them more than
12 accommodating.
13 They would take the time to explain things
14 and to walk the staff through various measures,
15 several things, in government, 638.
16 We hadn't had our 638 re-negotiated since
17 1997. Still haven't. We were in the middle of
18 talking about it when things kind of came to a halt.
19 Same with our indirect cost rate
20 negotiations. You know, the programs for the
21 government, making sure that we have the capacity.
22 There's an old saying, you can give a man a fish or
23 teach him how to fish.
24 We were looking to learn how to fish.
25 We're trying to grow our capacity as government,

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1 take care. I've got just over a thousand people
2 right now. We're a small Tribe, but they need to be
3 taken care of. It's our responsibility to do that,
4 and we want to learn how to navigate these things
5 and get things more efficient.
6 We're on board with that, but the
7 communication is the key. There was a period of
8 confusion here when the administration took over,
9 understandable, and I believe thank you that you're
10 having these consultations now to be able to resolve
11 that.
12 And I really hope that these
13 consultations, communications will come down to the
14 regional level once again, and we'll be able to talk
15 to everybody.
16 And please, please give your people the
17 authority to be able to make decisions, not just in
18 governance. Under that, we -- we face the same
19 things that everybody else in the United States is
20 facing now, because of the world events, the way the
21 world is.
22 I understand why some of the things are
23 the way they are. People everywhere are looking for
24 houses. Our Tribal members need houses. And I'm
25 certain every Tribe needs houses for their people,

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1 but it's not just there. It's also our neighbors
2 that our kids go to the same schools, and their
3 education.
4 You know, being able to fund those things.
5 Culturally we have the curriculum. We have
6 language. We have arts. We have music and poetry
7 and all these things, but we're not able to get it
8 out there to a school because we're not at capacity
9 yet.
10 We don't have that capacity yet. One day
11 we'll get there. And I want to work with every one
12 of your departments there in order to get to that
13 point where we do become self-sufficient and we have
14 self-determination.
15 That's what every Tribe wants, is to be
16 able to preserve their culture while getting better,
17 not only governance and housing and culture,
18 emergency response. Being able to put out the
19 fires.
20 We have a lot of fires down here in
21 Southern California, and then the rains come and
22 then we got a lot of floods, just the area we live.
23 But the panelists, you've got Tribes from
24 across the United States, and everywhere is unique.
25 They face different issues, so your offices are all

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 98</p> <p>1 taking in these issues, and it's got to be 2 communication to be able to mold the things that, 3 the tools that you have to be able to help each 4 Tribe overcome these forces, both natural and 5 unnatural.</p> <p>6 Our health care. We're a small Tribe, we 7 don't have the capacity. We don't have hospitals or 8 dealings with insurance companies and things like 9 that, but Tribes, we've been here a long time. When 10 I was a kid, they called it a melting pot. America 11 was the melting pot and you had all these people 12 coming in from different countries and they're all 13 working together for liberty and pursuit of 14 happiness, the American dream.</p> <p>15 They all had the same goal. I believe 16 that everybody still has the same goal. We are 17 working for the same things too. We want liberty 18 and the pursuit of happiness as well. And my 19 neighbors, from settled from a long time ago, 20 they're still here. Our kids, they play together 21 and they understand that we have a different 22 culture, and everybody's okay with that.</p> <p>23 We work together for the same goal. I 24 believe that it's that communication for our health 25 care, our education, and economic development. It's</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 100</p> <p>1 They won't be held up. They'll go directly to the 2 programs that are needed. The reporting will be 3 apparent by the product.</p> <p>4 The schools will be built. The kids will 5 be learning. People will be taken care of, the 6 hospitals. All that's possible, but we just need to 7 keep talking.</p> <p>8 I thank you all for your time today.</p> <p>9 KYLE VINT: Thank you, Chairman LaChusa. 10 We'll go next to Joel Jackson.</p> <p>11 Joel, you should have the ability to 12 unmute yourself.</p> <p>13 JOEL JACKSON: Can you hear me? 14 KYLE VINT: We can.</p> <p>15 JOEL JACKSON: Okay. My name is Joel 16 Jackson. I'm President of a small Tribe up in 17 Alaska, and I'm glad to see my other Tribal leaders 18 down there attending the meeting.</p> <p>19 First off, I'd like to say that we are 20 here to exercise our right to Tribal consultation. 21 However, we also know that decisions have already 22 been made, implemented, and before this consultation 23 occurred.</p> <p>24 This isn't government to government 25 consultation. And I'm going to read the same thing</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 99</p> <p>1 an unstable world right now.</p> <p>2 Anybody who has a 401(k) was pretty 3 worried there for a minute about a month ago, and 4 who knows what may happen in the future. There's 5 instability.</p> <p>6 Our job as a government for the Tribe is 7 to provide a stable environment for economic 8 development as well. It give people the ability to 9 open a business, to run a store, become a barber or 10 whatever it is, whatever trade or service that they 11 want to provide, to be able to have an environment 12 for that.</p> <p>13 To strengthen not only ourselves, but our 14 neighbors too. And as a whole, everyone around us, 15 makes us all stronger.</p> <p>16 So that's some of the things that we're 17 facing here. I'm looking forward to being able to 18 talk with in further details about the things, but I 19 highly, highly recommend that you give your offices, 20 your regional and on down the line, the tools that 21 they need, the personnel that they need to be able 22 to guide the Tribes where we want to be able to 23 become self-sufficient.</p> <p>24 And to direct those fundings. The 25 fundings will be able to be streamlined from there.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 101</p> <p>1 I read in Anchorage, mainly because I want you to 2 really listen to what we're saying.</p> <p>3 There is a lot in the BIA Dear-Tribal- 4 Leader letters and subsequent addendums. This is a 5 big undertaking by Tribal staff and Tribal leaders 6 to respond within a few weeks. We request more 7 time. There are no emergencies. We were not 8 consulted on any if there are any emergencies in 9 Kake, or any other Village or Tribe in Alaska to 10 declare this.</p> <p>11 BIA is already understaffed, underfunded. 12 There will be more delays in trust realty, engineer 13 time, human services, leases, land into trust, et 14 cetera. How is this efficient?</p> <p>15 Efficiency cannot be achieved if there 16 isn't enough people to do the work. So the 17 government needs to maintain staffing at appropriate 18 levels.</p> <p>19 And I'm glad to hear that you got the 20 staff that was let go, back. That's good news.</p> <p>21 Does that mean less oversight and Tribes 22 making their own important decisions without a heavy 23 hand of the BIA? We gladly do it. Self-government 24 Tribes should be exempt from justifying any 25 drawdowns.</p>

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1 Energy emergency. You cannot cut
2 departments and then declare an emergency on energy
3 development. There were already programs in place
4 for affordable, sustainable energy development
5 created and passed by Congress.
6 Tribes have deep concerns about the use of
7 the National Historical Preservation Acts for
8 emergency procedures. The United States is not in
9 the midst of an energy emergency as declared in the
10 executive order that was signed January 20, 2025.
11 The established Tribal consultation is now
12 to be a 7-day notification. We'll not do anything
13 to rapidly create more energy for the United States.
14 And I read this up in Anchorage. Speaking
15 from my heart, like I do all the time. It's very
16 sad that we have to fight for everything, everything
17 that we get.
18 The United States has a trust
19 responsibility and a treaty responsibility to all
20 the Tribes of the United States. We don't take that
21 lightly. We really don't. And I hope that this
22 gets back to whoever you're reporting to, that the
23 Tribes, we do the best we can.
24 We have to take care of our people. We're
25 just a small Tribe, but in Alaska, and I think most

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1 of my Tribal leaders would tell you, in our small
2 villages we have like 75, 80 percent unemployment.
3 We've lost half our population since the logging
4 boom.
5 Younger people had to go away to the
6 cities to find work, and talking about logging. Our
7 island has been opened up to logging. Our island's
8 name is Kupreanof Island. It's been heavily logged
9 by the Forest Service and our Tribal government, or
10 Tribal corporations.
11 Back then logging was in full, you know,
12 full scale logging was going on, and that was the
13 only work that we had. But after everything was
14 said and done, we looked back at our land and we
15 couldn't believe we did that to it.
16 As we got older we realized how much, and
17 we've always known it, we just got caught up in
18 making money, like everybody else. We were younger
19 and we didn't really think about it then. But as I
20 got older, became very, very real to me, about our
21 trust and our obligation to take care of our lands
22 and waters.
23 Right now our deer population is finally
24 coming back to the point where we can just hunt on
25 our island and we don't have to go across the

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1 channel to another island to hunt our deer.
2 The sad story of that whole thing, when
3 we're doing that, we lost three young men that
4 ventured across there to hunt deer, and on their way
5 back home they drowned.
6 So food security for our people here is
7 very important. Like everybody else, fish, all the
8 salmon that we depend on are salmon of the forest,
9 because they go up streams that are protected by the
10 forest shading the stream, keeping it cool, where
11 they can go up the stream, lay their eggs, spawn,
12 and the fish will come back in a year.
13 That has sustained us for thousands of
14 years when, you know, this time of year we're
15 excited about what's coming. We're excited about
16 our salmon coming back. It's a lot different than
17 going to Costco or whatever.
18 This is real food for us, and we all look
19 forward to it. There's no two ways about it, and I
20 think President Jones stated that the transboundary
21 mining, those three large mines in the Canadian side
22 of the three major salmon rivers, the Unuk, the
23 Taku, the Stikine, they're all going to be impacted
24 by those big mines that are opening up there.
25 And they're already starting to see signs

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1 of that. And these aren't just any small mines that
2 are going to be happening. These are major, major
3 mining companies that are building huge mines, and
4 they have to put what's called the tailings behind
5 the dam.
6 And we know enough about it to really be
7 concerned, because from research that had been done,
8 it's not if, but when will these dams fail.
9 And I've been at the head waters of these
10 three major rivers that feed into our side of the
11 border where all our salmon are going up to spawn.
12 And that's going to kill those rivers if
13 anything happens. We've seen it in a mining
14 operation called Mount Polley mining in Canada.
15 So that's my big concern, because we are
16 salmon people. It's very concerning of what's
17 happening now with the government opening up
18 everything, and then fast-tracking all the
19 procedures that were in place to protect the
20 ecosystems, to protect the environmental things.
21 To make sure that the logging operations
22 would be held accountable to doing it right.
23 Back when logging was in full operation,
24 we had three pulp mills located in Southeast Alaska,
25 in Sitka, Ketchikan, and Wrangell. And now we don't

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1 have that infrastructure, or the logging operation.
2 So opening up logging, and I think
3 somebody mentioned that, when they log, they logged
4 everything. It was called clear cutting. They cut
5 down everything, the good trees, bad trees. They
6 just cut down everything.
7 And they took all the best trees already.
8 It's called high grading. They took the best, and
9 the easiest trees to get. So we know from
10 experience that in order to make a profit, you got
11 to have the good trees, and those are all but gone.
12 And where are you going to find the good
13 trees now is going to be in our watersheds that
14 protect our salmon streams.
15 So these are all big concerns to us in
16 Southeast Alaska, and you heard our other two
17 presidents speak already, and I also see President
18 Peterson, our Tlingit and Haida is also there.
19 I just wanted to let you know, these are
20 all big concerns to us. This is our way of life, so
21 I'll end it with that.
22 Thank you for your time, and hopefully
23 we'll have more talks and give us more time before
24 we respond, or we have to respond.
25 Thank you.

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1 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.
2 President Richard Peterson.
3 RICHARD PETERSON: Good morning. Oh, is
4 it afternoon? I'm on Alaska time, still morning.
5 Good to see you folks again. We're going
6 to be really good friends by the end of this, so
7 appreciate you being here.
8 I want to say respectfully to Kelly,
9 welcome to our world. Your travel experiences are
10 our norm, so we feel you, late nights, our Vice
11 President the had same experience.
12 And those are the issues that we face in
13 Alaska in our rural communities. When we talk about
14 Alaska, people don't really understand the expanse
15 until you come there, and so we always officially
16 invite our secretaries and everybody, please come,
17 come and see Alaska and understand.
18 We always hear that we're different and
19 we're this and we're that, but we're the same
20 Indigenous people, and I think that's important to
21 recognize.
22 And I want to acknowledge the Indigenous
23 people whose land we're on now and thank them for
24 allowing us to be here, and it's important.
25 I also want to say at the beginning I

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1 thought we were supposed to start with a prayer.
2 And I'm not going to offer one, but I am going to
3 just say, (Native language spoken). That's our
4 Creator in our languages, and we just want to
5 recognize and bring our Creator in the space with us
6 and guide us, so I just want to say that.
7 My name is (Native language spoken), my
8 English name is Richard Peterson, and I serve as the
9 President of the Central Council of Tlingit and
10 Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska.
11 We're a sovereign Tribal government
12 representing over 38,000 Tribal citizens from our
13 home in Southeast Alaska. We proudly employ 640
14 individuals of whom 80 percent are our Tribal
15 citizens. Not other Native Americans are Alaska
16 Natives. Those work for us too, but 80 percent of
17 our workforce is our own Tribal citizens, and I
18 think that's really important to recognize and
19 emphasize.
20 And of which my executive leadership, our
21 COO, CFO, general council are all Tribal citizens
22 which is an edict and a mandate from myself as
23 president, that if you're going to be an executive
24 at our Tribe, you have to be one of our Tribal
25 citizens.

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1 Because the message to our people is,
2 we're good enough. I think that's really important.
3 As Tribal Nations, we share your goal of
4 efficient and effective government. For us, that
5 means ensuring resources and decision making are as
6 close to our communities as possible, not tied up in
7 federal bottlenecks.
8 For far too long federal policy has been
9 developed without the full participation of Tribal
10 governments. The result, systems that don't reflect
11 our realities, that delay services, and that treat
12 Tribal nations as afterthoughts instead of governing
13 partners.
14 We appreciated hearing during this
15 consultation that the Department of Interior
16 recognizes and respects Tribal sovereignty.
17 That acknowledgment is foundational, and
18 now we must carry that recognition forward by
19 ensuring it's upheld, not only within DOI but across
20 the entire federal government. Indian Affairs isn't
21 limited to DOI or BIA. Whether it's the USDA, HUD,
22 HHS, or FEMA, which I've heard all referred to
23 today, every federal agency must understand and
24 respect Tribal sovereignty.
25 And DOI must lead the charge in helping

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1 its sister agencies build the Tribal relationships
2 and internal capacity necessary to uphold that
3 responsibility.
4 Tribes should no longer be the subject of
5 failed social experiments. It's time for a new
6 chapter, one where Tribal sovereignty is honored,
7 not just in words, but in practice.
8 When we talk about restructuring Indian
9 Affairs, a centralized approach to efficiency simply
10 doesn't work for Tribal governments. True
11 efficiency means investing in field offices,
12 retaining experienced regional staff, and delegating
13 decision making authority where it's needed most, in
14 our communities.
15 Tribes must be co-designers, not passive
16 consultees in any restructuring effort. Our local
17 knowledge is a resource, not a roadblock.
18 I heard the gentleman before me talking
19 about how we can learn to fish. Well, we can teach
20 you how to fish.
21 And let's talk about accountability.
22 Critical functions like 105(l) leases and probate
23 are backlogged by more than a year. If Tribes were
24 this late on our reporting, we'd face consequences.
25 We're asking the federal government to meet the same

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1 standard of accountability we're held to every day.
2 Tlingit and Haida was the first 477 Tribe
3 in the nation. We've proven that self-governance
4 leads to better results, faster service, and
5 culturally grounded solutions. We need to treat
6 compacting as the norm, not the exception, and we
7 ask DOI to take a leadership role in coordinating
8 with other agencies like USDA, EPA, HUD, and FEMA to
9 expand Tribal compacting pathways across the federal
10 government.
11 Land into trust must be made accessible to
12 Tribes, especially in Alaska. The current process
13 is too slow, too costly, and creates barriers to
14 economic development and sovereignty. I want to
15 mention in 2022, the department rightfully took a
16 small parcel of land into trust for Tlingit and
17 Haida.
18 The courts have since reaffirmed that DOI
19 has the authority to take land into trust in Alaska.
20 It's deeply concerning that the department may now
21 reverse course and side with the state, essentially
22 asking the court to take away its own authority.
23 This makes no sense to us. The department
24 has a responsibility to support Tribal self-
25 governance, and trust land is a critical tool for

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1 exercising economic sovereignty.
2 I also want to point out, I've had
3 conversations with the State of Alaska, with their
4 leadership and their Attorney General. One of their
5 driving reasons that they oppose land to trust in
6 Alaska is they think that it means we'll take
7 hundreds of thousands of lands acres into trust.
8 The land that Tlingit and Haida put into
9 trust so far, if I was really creative I could park
10 four vehicles on that land. I'm not even
11 exaggerating. It's smaller than this room.
12 We don't want to take it all into trust
13 because that ties our own hands, but we do want to
14 protect our ancestral home lands, the places where
15 our forefathers and mothers were born and raised,
16 and passed down to us what we have today.
17 We want to protect that into perpetuity so
18 it's protected for our future generations. Tlingit
19 and Haida, when I became president eleven years ago,
20 we had about 13 acres of land. I think I'm actually
21 overexaggerating that.
22 Today we have nearly I think 700 acres of
23 land. We don't want to put almost any of that into
24 trust. We want to have the ability to use it as we
25 see fit without asking our paternal partners'

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1 permission.
2 We want to govern in sovereignty, but we
3 have to understand that again opposing Tribes
4 putting land into trust really hurts our own state,
5 and they don't see that.
6 We need you, our partners, to work with us
7 to help them understand that and to protect that
8 right, that we be able to continue to put land into
9 trust.
10 In Southeast Alaska, you heard from our
11 Vice President Clinton Cook, who is also the
12 President of its local Craig Tribe, and he told you,
13 they got one acre of land in a trust. Such a tiny
14 parcel has been monumental for their Tribe and for
15 their community.
16 It's meant new economic opportunities
17 they've never enjoyed before. When other Tribes are
18 handing out distributions through ARPA and other
19 doings, people thought they were illegally doing it.
20 They were using their own money that they were able
21 to gain from having land into trust, to take care of
22 their citizens as they saw fit.
23 Not how you saw fit, or I saw fit, but
24 through self-determination how they saw fit for
25 themselves. That's all we're asking.

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 114</p> <p>1 If we're serious about reducing 2 bureaucracy, then invest in Tribal capacity. Give 3 us direct flexible funding, just like the U.S. 4 territories receive, and reduce the need for 5 burdensome grant applications and duplicative 6 reporting. 7 At the end of the day, Tribes aren't 8 asking for special treatment. We're asking for 9 respect for our governments, our communities, and 10 for our ability to lead. 11 If the goal is a more effective 12 government, then we're ready to help you get there, 13 but we expect to be treated as equals in that 14 effort. 15 We urge you to honor the trust 16 responsibility by advancing real co-governance with 17 Tribal Nations, not just within DOI, but across the 18 entire federal government. We value the opportunity 19 to engage in these discussions, however meaningful 20 consultation must reflect a true government to 21 government relationship, conducted directly between 22 decision makers. 23 Accordingly, we respectfully request 24 formal Tribal consultation to review these proposed 25 changes in greater detail with our Tribal council.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 116</p> <p>1 scientific input within a two-week window is 2 unrealistic. 3 We fear that with the shrinking federal 4 workforce, consultation will become a check-the-box 5 exercise. That's not acceptable. 6 This gathering, while significant, is not 7 consultation. Tlingit and Haida offers the 8 following recommendations. 9 First, avoid compressed timelines that 10 don't allow for real notice, internal coordination, 11 or engagement with Tribes. Every Tribe governs 12 differently. This must be understood and respected. 13 Second, uphold federal trust and treaty 14 obligations but allowing for meaningful 15 consultation, including Indigenous knowledge in NEPA 16 and ESA processes, and by protecting the subsistence 17 resources under Title 8 of ANILCA. 18 Third, improve, not reduce, NHPA 19 consultation. Most Alaska Tribes don't have 20 dedicated preservation officers, and often marine 21 sites and traditional cultural properties go 22 overlooked, especially in Southeast Alaska. 23 Consultation must be meaningful and fully 24 funded to safeguard places of historic and cultural 25 importance.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 115</p> <p>1 As President of Tlingit and Haida, I want 2 to be clear. We support approving permitting and 3 environmental review processes, especially when 4 those delays impact urgent housing and 5 infrastructure needs in our communities. But 6 streamlining must not come at the expense of Tribal 7 sovereignty, sacred places, or the federal 8 government's trust responsibilities. 9 In Southeast Alaska where our people have 10 lived since time immemorial, land and water are 11 central to who we are. These are not abstract 12 resources. They are our food systems, our burial 13 grounds, our very way of life. 14 Proposals to compress environmental 15 reviews under NEPA to 14 or 28 days, and in 16 consultation under the Endangered Species and 17 National Historic Preservation Act to as little as 7 18 days, are unworkable and disrespectful. 19 Many Tribes, especially in rural Alaska, 20 don't receive timely notice. The majority of our 21 communities are only accessible by plane or boat. 22 Mail can take anywhere from 14 to 30 days, and in 23 the summer we are out on the land and water 24 protecting our way of life. 25 Expecting meaningful legal, cultural, and</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 117</p> <p>1 And finally, balance efficiency with 2 Tribal sovereignty and stewardship. Pursue 3 permitting efficiency without compromising Tribal 4 sovereignty, cultural survival, or stewardship. 5 We are the boots on the ground in our 6 rural communities. Let's find a path forward 7 together. We ask you to work with us, and not 8 against us. 9 And as always, I remind everybody, healthy 10 Tribes make healthy communities. 11 (Native language spoken). 12 KELLY RAE: Thank you, President, and we 13 sincerely apologize for not opening a prayer. That 14 is the most important, and we apologize for failing 15 in that, and thank you for bringing it up. 16 BRYAN MERCIER: If I may, President 17 Peterson, I appreciate the invitation as well, and 18 in our closing remarks yesterday, again after most 19 of the Tribal leaders had left, we shared a little 20 bit about our experience in Alaska, and many of us 21 up here actually have quite a bit. 22 I see President Jackson is still on from 23 the Village of Kake, but my first time in Alaska was 24 in 2006 where I had an opportunity to actually pull 25 in the Dog Salmon Canoe races at the Dog Salmon</p>

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1 Festival on the Village of Kake, after visiting in
2 Sitka.
3 And Kelly was stationed in Alaska, met her
4 husband in Alaska, and so we've been to many of the
5 communities up there, and we will be coming back, so
6 appreciate the invitation as well. So thank you.
7 So Ben, before we go to the next, I just
8 want to ask for permission. We did this yesterday
9 and it was clear from the leaders in the crowd that
10 we should just continue without taking a break.
11 Is it okay if we continue to do that, or
12 do we want a break today? I know, if we continue,
13 we would just ask you for permission that we can eat
14 while folks are talking? And you all can step out
15 and go eat, and then come back.
16 I'm just, I guess, taking a logistics
17 check here, Ben. How many more Tribal leaders do we
18 have to speak, do we want a break, because there may
19 be quite a few online as well.
20 BEN DUNCAN: We have nine signed up. I
21 don't think we have any other hands online.
22 BRYAN MERCIER: Okay.
23 BEN DUNCAN: So maybe a raise of hands,
24 you want a break for 15 or so? Grab food, stretch,
25 walk around?

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1 This is a yes, if you want to.
2 BRYAN MERCIER: Yeah, who wants a break?
3 BEN DUNCAN: Okay. I'm seeing enough
4 break hands, that I think why don't we take 15.
5 BRYAN MERCIER: Okay.
6 BEN DUNCAN: We'll come back in 15
7 minutes.
8 BRYAN MERCIER: Try to be back at 1:00.
9 BEN DUNCAN: 1:00, thank you.
10 (WHEREUPON, the CONSULTATION recessed at
11 1:46 p.m.)
12 BEN DUNCAN: Is it on? Hello? Hello?
13 KYLE VINT: Yeah.
14 BEN DUNCAN: Hello, hello, hello, hello.
15 All right. Thank you. So we're back on. I see --
16 is it Vice President Paulette Moreno. You're going
17 to be up, but before you jump, Kyle, do you want to
18 talk to the virtual audience real quick?
19 KYLE VINT: I just wanted to remind the
20 virtual audience -- the tribal leaders who are in
21 the virtual audience that if you would like to
22 engage in this period of the consultation to raise
23 your hand or use star 9 if you're joining by phone.
24 And keep that hand up so that we can include you in
25 the queue and make sure that we are able to allow

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1 you to participate.
2 KELLY RAE: And -- and if we could --
3 could we -- we want to set the tone right, the
4 second half, so if we could get someone to open up
5 in prayer so we can do it right. Do we have any
6 volunteer? Okay. Thank you.
7 RICHARD PETERSON: -- want to work with
8 them that they, yeah, that you bring us the guidance
9 and that we do the good work, and that while we may
10 have strong disagreements, that we always walk away
11 united and -- and knowing that we have your love and
12 strength guiding us. We say this in your name.
13 Amen.
14 PAULETTE MORENO: Good afternoon, and
15 welcome back. Thank you to President Peterson for
16 inviting the spirit, the sacred spirit of which
17 holds our people forward. For every word that is
18 shared on this land that is released, you'll forever
19 be accountable. That is a responsibility and a
20 knowledge that as you go forward and you carry our
21 500 nations -- over 500 nations with you, with the
22 experience of those who have went before us, who are
23 the closest to the land, the water in the sea, who
24 have this place of knowledge that we are sharing and
25 that we are coming before you with.

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1 With that, it's an honor to be here and
2 welcome back. And welcome to everybody online also,
3 at this time. I'm of my mother's people, the
4 Tlingit Leeneidí (native language spoken), in the
5 village of Aak'w Kwaan, the Yaxte House. I'm a
6 child of the Kaagwaantaan. My English name is
7 Paulette Moreno. And I serve as the sixth vice
8 president of the Central Council of the Tlingit &
9 Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska. We are the largest
10 federally recognized tribe in Alaska, and serve as a
11 regional tribe for Southeast Alaska, representing
12 more than 38,000 tribal citizens.
13 I would like to acknowledge the Nisenan
14 people and say thank you for allowing us to speak
15 these words on your lands and all other indigenous
16 tribes of this area. I want to speak to what real
17 tribal self-government looks like. Not in theory,
18 but in practice. Tlingit & Haida is a national
19 model for compacting and consolidation of services,
20 but that didn't happen by accident. It took decades
21 of work, advocacy and intentional investment in our
22 capacity as a tribal government.
23 From federal presence to tribal capacity,
24 what we've proven works. At one time the BIA had a
25 full-service office in Juneau, Alaska. Over time,

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1 as Tlingit & Haida entered into compacts and
2 contracts under the ISDEAA, we took on more and more
3 of those services. We didn't do it to replace the
4 BIA, we did it because we had the capacity, the
5 infrastructure, and most importantly, the trust of
6 our communities. From -- today we operate over 30
7 departments, employ more than 640 staff, and manage
8 100-dollar million budget. We have offices not only
9 in Alaska, but in the Seattle, as well as here in
10 Sacramento areas.

11 We have nearly 2000 tribal citizens in the
12 San Francisco area. We provide social services,
13 public safety, workforce programs, child welfare,
14 and tribal court operations, many of which were
15 handled by federal agencies. That's not just
16 compacting. That's full spectrum tribal governance
17 in action. But that doesn't mean less government,
18 it means smarter government. Let me be clear. BIA
19 downsizing didn't make things better for tribes. It
20 was investment in tribal capacity.

21 Restructuring Indian affairs should be
22 about meeting tribes where they are, not assuming
23 one model fits all. What worked for Tlingit & Haida
24 may not work for other tribes in different parts of
25 the country. That's why staff with regionable --

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1 regional experience still matter. That's why true
2 tribal consultation and local decision-making
3 matter. The path forward is investment, not
4 consultation -- or excuse me, consolidation.

5 Efficiency doesn't come from cutting
6 corners, letting go of dedicated and experienced
7 staff, or closing offices in places where they are
8 needed the most. Efficiency comes from investing in
9 tribal nations and trusting us to lead. What
10 Tlingit & Haida needs now is sustained support for
11 compacting, technical assistance for smaller tribes
12 that want to follow this path and meaningful
13 coordination across DOI, USDA, EPA, FEMA, and
14 others, because sovereignty does not stop at the
15 Bureau of Indian Affairs.

16 We are living proof that tribal
17 governments can operate full-service systems,
18 offering -- often delivering better outcomes when
19 the federal government entrusts us with the
20 resources and respect due to sovereign nations.
21 When investment is local, leadership is native, and
22 solutions are culturally grounded, our communities
23 thrive. We urge this administration to move beyond
24 old frameworks, to be bold, to build with us, not
25 for us.

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1 Tribal nations. Invest in tribal nations,
2 not as an obligation, but as a proven pathway to
3 stronger, healthier, and more resilient communities.
4 The time to lead differently is now, and we are
5 ready to do so. In doing so, also, we must protect
6 our mothers and children through the Violence
7 Against Women Act. We must protect the murdered and
8 missing and indigenous people of our land because we
9 come forward as the people not to beg before anyone.

10 We have dignity. We have strength. We
11 are the people of the land. The United States
12 Government -- and I'll speak from my heart as our
13 president, vice presidents, and others have -- we
14 come forward not to beg. We come forward to offer
15 guidance. We come forward to direct the best path
16 forward, which is a path that we have for time
17 immemorial and tens of thousands of years, took care
18 of our streams, our rivers, our people, our
19 children, our elders, and even guests who came to
20 this land not even knowing how to harvest a plant or
21 a food or fish.

22 Now we live together. And how is it that
23 we should go forward? We should go forward. And
24 once again, you are accountable, forever
25 accountable, on how you will create this basket to

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1 carry the words forward. I ask that you would do so
2 with strength, with dignity, and with truth. Not
3 only the words that have been released that may
4 sound good when you write your reports, but the
5 honest truth of what we are saying as a people,
6 because I believe that we are saying that it is time
7 that we are the ones that lead.

8 That we've done it for tens and thousands
9 of years for what we call time immemorial. And we
10 stand ready to take our rightful place and to do it
11 again. And because of that, this is not just the
12 United States of America. This is traditional,
13 territory, and land. And right now, as you always
14 have, you'll need our assistance, and we stand ready
15 to assist. Good exchange, Háw'aa". Thank you for
16 your time.

17 BRYAN MERCIER: Thank you.

18 KELLY RAE: Thank you. Are there any
19 questions? Right. Thank you so much.

20 BRYAN MERCIER: Thank you. Looks like
21 Chairman Shine Nieto. Okay. Thank you.

22 SHINE NIETO: (Native language spoken)
23 Shine Nieto. (Native language spoken) Tule River,
24 Central Valley Tribe, 2000 strong. So it's come
25 here in a good way to -- to say what our tribe needs

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1 in Tule River. You know, some of our needs and
2 concerns, not complaints. I want to stand here and
3 complain to you guys, but thank you for being here
4 to listen to what I have to say from my -- on behalf
5 of my tribe.
6 So and I come in a good way to the people
7 of this land also to speak my mind and speak for my
8 people. You know, we got a lot of things going on
9 back home that we have roadblocks on, you know, with
10 our water settlement. Thanks for the Congressman
11 Fong now. Leaving here from Sacramento to go over
12 there to reduce our bill over there and help us out.
13 So I don't know if you guys can help him
14 out to get things done with him, to see what he
15 needs to push because I know he's new to DC and, you
16 know, we need his help to -- to get our water
17 rights. You know, some -- some people like said
18 earlier, that's different -- different types of
19 things going on. The dams get taken down up north,
20 but we need a dam to save our people, you know.
21 So with that dam, we'll be -- be able to
22 have good water and have -- bring housing to -- to
23 where they put us at, you know, where we used to be
24 from. Before pre-contact, we was from (native
25 language spoken) to Stockton, Mountain Ridge --

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1 Mountain Ridge. And so now we're put up in a little
2 Hitler camp called a reservation, and -- and we're
3 in -- in -- in Granite Hills where we can't even
4 build too many housing.
5 So now we're trying to buy land back from
6 the people that was -- it was given to, to mine and
7 -- and -- and agriculture and everything else. I
8 mean, we had to agree with the downstream users when
9 our -- our water was given away in 1922 when we
10 wasn't even considered animals, you know. And so,
11 you know, 1971, one of my elders, Emeritus Chairman,
12 Alec Garfield, started fighting for our water back.
13 And we had to make agreements with the --
14 the downstream users just to -- just to get to this
15 point. You know what I mean? And so he's -- he's
16 older now. He's an elder, and you know what I mean?
17 I don't -- I don't want to be that same elder
18 standing in front of you guys or someone new, and --
19 and still holding the baton and not getting this
20 done, I mean.
21 And growing up we always -- I'm sure some
22 of you sitting here used to call this place the
23 United Snakes of America, and -- and nothing has
24 changed. Sometimes it's still the same way. You
25 know, we're spending money we could be spending on

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1 our youth and elders to go out to DC to come here
2 and -- and we're still fighting the same fight as my
3 elder did, you know.
4 And so when does that stop? When does
5 that end? When does -- when do we get treated like
6 human beings, and -- and -- and not caretakers of
7 this land? You know, you hear -- you see in this
8 room that -- before when it's full with all these
9 elders, this elder I met from Umatilla, you know,
10 he's coming here for the same reasons. And -- and
11 we're all here for the same reasons, over and over.
12 We come to DC, we come to Sacramento, and
13 we expect people to hear us. And, you know, when we
14 leave, we think we -- we did good and then get home
15 and then the answer's no to us once again, you know.
16 Or -- or, you know, where I come from our tribe's
17 not hoop dancers, but it seemed like that's all we
18 do is hoop dance, you know, and through hoops of
19 America every -- every day.
20 And -- and so, you know, I just got to go
21 to the tribe that's a hoop dancer so I could learn
22 how to dance to hoops, you mean. So I'm -- I'm
23 just, you know, we got a lot of things that I'll put
24 in the comments and written comments, and I don't
25 want to stand here and think that I'm bawling you

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1 guys out, because I know you're only the messenger.
2 So I don't want to kill you guys with -- with my
3 griefs of my tribe.
4 And -- and -- but, you know, we -- like
5 just little things. You know, we got the fentanyl
6 crisis. You know, we -- I was -- I'm tired like
7 you. I was three days in Berkeley fighting for our
8 ancestors back from that institution because they
9 don't want to give us our ancestors back. You know
10 what I mean? And all through California, all
11 through -- we go to Chicago, we go to Brooklyn to
12 get the -- try to get these things back.
13 And all these things are a law, and they
14 don't even like to follow them. You know what I
15 mean? But if I -- but if I punch one of these guys
16 in the face, because I'm mad, then I'm going to go
17 to jail. That -- I'm -- I'm going to have to follow
18 the law, you know. But these guys never have to
19 follow no laws that are -- are made up by United
20 States or are -- are -- are -- are even this -- this
21 state.
22 You know, like our kids with their hats
23 and their beaded feathers and everything else, they
24 can't even graduate across the stage without someone
25 giving them rules to it. You know what I mean?

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1 That's our culture. You know, and -- and that's a
2 law here in California, and they're still fighting
3 for that, you know. And it's like everything's
4 always taken from us and -- and -- and -- and we
5 stand here to basically plead for -- for decades,
6 you know, for -- for some help, for some assistance,
7 you know.
8 And here I'm fighting for the water, and
9 then the -- the housing gets cut in half. And now
10 I'm -- now I'm going to be fighting for the water I
11 was trying to get for housing. Now, I don't even
12 have the money to get housing now because it's cut,
13 you know. So when does it change for us, you know?
14 I -- I came out of a meeting in DC one
15 time and I said something about Third World
16 countries, like the elder before me, and -- and some
17 lady that's native too, she told me, "You shouldn't
18 even compare us to Third World countries." And I
19 kind of got mad at first because, you know, that was
20 -- that was one of my thoughts of how we get
21 treated. But, you know, in the end when I thought
22 about it, she's right because we're not Third World
23 countries because they get treated better than us.
24 They get millions and billions of dollars
25 sent to them while we get nothing, I mean. And --

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1 and if we got a little bit of their -- their --
2 their change that they got, I mean, we can make
3 change in our lands. So it's -- it's just -- it's
4 just sad that we all have to be here to -- to do
5 this in front of you guys. And then what do we get
6 out of it? Like my bro Ivanko said, you know, we're
7 just checking boxes then.
8 You know, I -- I could be at home checking
9 the sleep box right now, you know, so. But, you
10 know, I don't want to stand here like I said, I have
11 written comments, but, you know, I'm just -- I -- I
12 just want to let you know like, you know, the things
13 that we have to go through.
14 Like we're -- we're -- we're trying to
15 take the -- the electrical poles out of -- out of
16 our lands and put -- get with SCE and be partners
17 with them to put it underground so when somebody
18 hits a pole, that we don't -- the whole res don't
19 shut down electricity and our elders food don't go
20 bad in their fridge. You know what I mean? So --
21 and then we have to jump through another hoop just
22 to do that.
23 You know what I mean? So we -- we need
24 some change for just -- for us to be really
25 sovereign. So we can say, "Yeah, go ahead and do

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1 that SCE because we said you could because you're on
2 our land." You know what I mean? "Go ahead and do
3 this over here with the housing, because this is our
4 land."
5 You mean, has been doing this to us,
6 taking families lands from -- because they can't pay
7 them back in the day before we started sustaining
8 ourselves. But those -- those HUD Homes are on --
9 on people's families assignments and -- and they put
10 somebody else from another family on there because
11 that family couldn't pay. And, you know, when does
12 that land ever go back to us? It -- it don't.
13 It stays with HUD and they just get to
14 dictate who -- who stays there and who lives there.
15 You know what I mean? And it's like we -- we -- we
16 can't do too much. It's -- it's always same thing.
17 It's always like there's always a rule to us -- to
18 rule us. And -- and when does the ruling stop?
19 When do you put your hand over us? I mean, and then
20 -- and -- and Trump did a couple good things for us,
21 you know, in his administration, the last time.
22 He, you know, he helped us move off the
23 res to our -- with our casino to get us more
24 sustainable to -- to get more fit. But like, you
25 know, with this water thing, it's like, you know,

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1 when does that end for us? When do -- when do we
2 get to have a good drink and water?
3 When do we -- when do we get to -- you
4 know, I wanted to drink a bottle over there, that
5 water that you guys are offering, but like I think
6 about my elders at home that don't even got good
7 water to drink. So I might stand there and drink a
8 water, being at this, when they're at home not even
9 having good water to drink. I mean, so that --
10 those are the things we go through on Tule River.
11 And I just wanted you guys to, you know,
12 hear -- hear -- hear what I had to say and in a
13 short point, and then you could hear my written
14 comments, hopefully read them and -- and go through
15 that. So thank you for letting me -- allowing me to
16 speak today and on behalf of my tribe, (native
17 language spoken).
18 KYLE VINT: Thank you, Chairman.
19 I invite Chairman Gary Burke.
20 GARY BURKE: Good afternoon. Gary Burke,
21 Chairman of the Board of Trustees and the
22 Confederate Tribe, the Umatilla Indian Reservation,
23 Oregon, the Northeast Park, ends of the Umatilla
24 Tribe, our Walla Walla tribe, and the Cayuse makes
25 us the Confederated Tribes, our homeland up there in

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1 -- or Northeast Oregon of -- Oregon.
2 I'm the chairman of the Board of Trustees,
3 Confederate Tribe of the Umatilla Indian
4 Reservation, CTUIR, federally recognized Indians
5 headquarters in the Northeast Oregon, which is, I
6 guess you could call that our stronghold between the
7 three tribes. But we communicate with the
8 surrounding tribes because we have in common with
9 songs, natural resources, songs and traditional and
10 culture. I got sent with a lot of pages, but I'm
11 just going to read the highlights.
12 I'll mail you the rest. I was talking to
13 my -- I brought my lawyer here, Joe Pitt, said,
14 "You're here in the afternoon putting everybody to
15 sleep." But anyway, restructuring the Bureau of
16 Indian Affairs to support more efficient
17 interactions with tribes, addressing current
18 funding, structuring, including identifying
19 efficiency barriers. Now, we're going to read all
20 of this and all the comments that interior sent us
21 in the letter, expended funding to the tribes and
22 tribes' programs, and increasing Indian affairs
23 support for tribals, self-determination, self-
24 governance.
25 The CTUIR has reviewed executive order

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1 14210, as well as the related orders, 14158, and
2 14170. We have experienced firsthand in the
3 immediate results, the recent buyout offers to the
4 federal employees. The buying out offer was
5 accepted by a number of employees in the Bureau of
6 Indian Affairs, BIA, Bureau of Trust Funds
7 Administration, BTFA, and that provides services to
8 support CTUIR.
9 We understand that the administration is
10 seeking ways, streamlining federal services, and the
11 accountability of the -- insure efficient use of the
12 taxpayer dollars. The Board of Trustees is
13 responsible to address the needs of the members of
14 the CTUIR. In the same spirit, we also have the
15 obligations to our people to ensure that the federal
16 government fulfills its trust responsibility to the
17 CTUIR members. And I guess that speaks to all the
18 tribes in the United States.
19 Under the Treaty of 1855 with the United
20 States Government, 12 Statute 0.945, a copy of which
21 is enclosed and under associated federal law,
22 Supreme Court, precedence in the DOI, BIA, BFTA are
23 tasked with carrying out what program's necessary to
24 fulfill federal trust responsibility in Indian
25 tribes. In the code of federal regulations 25 CFRs

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1 first pages says, "In the interest of all the
2 tribes." That's a lot of tribes. And what
3 interests are there?
4 As you all heard, there's many that have
5 those concerns. You've heard them, and probably I'm
6 going to repeat them all. We read the letter and
7 we're going to microscope the issue that you had on
8 that letter. When I say that I'm -- as you heard,
9 I'm a treaty tribe that we made in the Walla Walla
10 Valley. We had 11 days to make that treaty, along
11 with other tribes in the Pacific Northwest. Eleven
12 days, that's not very long.
13 And during that 11 days they wanted to
14 know what we wanted then. How can we help you? So
15 the tribes negotiated a treaty, living the articles
16 of law by statute. With these three tribes that we
17 live on, in the land at -- at that time, was a
18 territory and it turned into reservation, then the
19 government. Then we had a constitution and bylaws
20 that they wrote in 1949.
21 My grandfather was -- had a lot to do with
22 writing that along with the other elders, what they
23 was going to do in the constitution and bylaws for
24 our tribe. First they said, "Well, if you don't
25 write this constitution and bylaws for your people,

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1 then we'll write it for you." So they wrote it.
2 They had one lawyer, you know, back in
3 those days they were lucky to get that one lawyer,
4 say what they wanted to write in the constitution
5 and bylaws for the tribes -- for the Confederate
6 Tribe Umatilla Indian Reservation. Reading some of
7 the questions that we've received in the letter, the
8 CTUIR opposes the budget on staffing cuts,
9 consolidations, eliminations of the BIA, Umatilla
10 Indian Agency Office.
11 The Umatilla Indian Nation Reservation has
12 a complicated mix of tribal and a lot of trust
13 lands, tribes fee lands, as well as the non-Indian
14 owned lands and that we require to have given
15 informational on BIA participation in land lease
16 management. These are just some of the things that
17 we have to still look at. And the time limit, I
18 have to say maybe too short. And I say that because
19 when we made those treaties, every tribe in this
20 room, it states you're a nation within the nation.
21 Now, we're government nations. When
22 everybody -- what they call put their hands on that
23 treaty and their seal. When I read the treaty a
24 long time ago, I read it because my dad was in
25 politics. And he said, "You better read that. You

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1 read it good." And I read it. And at the time, I
2 was younger and didn't understand it really. But
3 the last article of law in that treaty, that's what
4 it says.
5 "When they put their hands on it after
6 ratification and proclamation and the tribal leaders
7 put their hands on it and their seal." What was the
8 seal? So by the stroke of a pen, they made their X.
9 Every leader and every tribal leader owned that from
10 the three tribes, put an X, probably how a lot of
11 the treaties were made, not a signature. They
12 didn't understand it, had an interpreter, but they
13 got what they kind of wanted by the 11 articles of
14 law.
15 Have those laws been fulfilled? Sometimes
16 you read articles, broken promises. Are they broken
17 promises or are they violations or complaints? The
18 way the policy system works, you got a complaint
19 first and then find out if it's a violation or a
20 complaint, then you fix it. I believe we probably
21 could work with some of this stuff and some of it we
22 oppose. First time I read the letter, I said, "Wow,
23 it looks like a big reorganization already, not a
24 consultation."
25 Definition of a consultation is seek

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1 advice -- advice or information. That's what the
2 dictionary says. So I guess all these tribes that
3 live here -- I just came from the Affiliated Tribes
4 of Northwest. The chairman was talking about here,
5 Leonard Forsman. We had a big meeting with all the
6 tribes talking about the questions that we're going
7 to answer and that we're going to support.
8 Questions are still on the table. Some tribes just
9 want to go with it. Some tribes oppose it. Some
10 are neutral.
11 But why is that? I guess somebody forgot
12 the supreme law of the land and the trust
13 responsibility. You look at our reservations up in
14 Umatilla, we signed the treaty, put our seal on it,
15 and then here comes the Dawes Act, the Allotment
16 Act. Many more acts followed it. Recommendations,
17 the issues that we have cited above are not unique
18 to the CTUIR.
19 Recognizing ongoing federal obligations
20 under treaties and federal law and any other
21 reorganization in the BIA, it focused on the
22 requirements of the agency and take into account the
23 deficiency staffing capabilities, correcting
24 existing along with the many backlogs of lack of
25 timely processing, critical trust actions, efforts,

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1 address backlogs impacted by the federal workforce
2 reduction. That's pretty bad.
3 As such, CTUIR believes that any
4 reorganization of BIA and the BFTA must be done in a
5 way that addresses these deficiencies. This will
6 require maintaining current staff and maybe adding
7 more funding sources. While the BIA's frontline
8 agencies fulfilling federal trust or obligations in
9 Indian tribes, federal department and agencies and
10 obligations of the laws. You know what? All the --
11 the tribes I've been listening to, have the same
12 story.
13 I want to say these are true stories of
14 the lives where they come from. If you're going to
15 say a story, put it on paper. Where are these words
16 going to go? Are they going to fall on deaf ears?
17 I believe that they should have the respect of some
18 of the leadership in the room to go out to these
19 tribes and actually look at them. Take a tour of
20 the tribes. See what self-determination is. See
21 what self-governance is.
22 I believe that would open the eyes of many
23 leaders in the Bureau and the interior to actually
24 face the tribes. Go out and see what their success
25 stories are with the families of the reservations.

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1 Seeing is believing, how long they existed. A lot
2 of non-Indians they call them superstitious. It's
3 like the prayer. We don't kick our creator out of
4 our business or our reservation, is going to stay
5 there for a long time.
6 Some have songs, some have Indian prayers,
7 some have long houses where they can speak their own
8 tongue, speak in the prayer, talking to the creator.
9 That's a big part of our lives to witness something
10 like that. My grandfather would say though, just
11 because the people don't understand the songs, the
12 language, the ways of life that, I guess you can say
13 Native Americans, and that's a big word instead of
14 American Indians, like it says in the Code of
15 Regulations of the CFR, but they're both important
16 to the tribes.
17 Tribal nations need to be respected. And
18 I would advise some of the bureau people to go out
19 and really look at them. See the people that you
20 govern or help. We'll support you if you come out
21 and do that for us. Actually see and talk to them.
22 Give them that respect of this land that they once
23 had forever, and they're going to continue to do
24 what they do on their lands with or without the
25 help.

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1 The time I asked them -- one of our
2 leaders and some of the elders were asking for
3 something. And some of them said, "Well, you go do
4 what you want with your money. We're going to do it
5 anyway. We don't need it then. You don't have to
6 tell me I'm going to practice to get paid to teach
7 children." And that was a big strong word, after I
8 heard it. And he was right.

9 They wouldn't ask for nothing. They kept
10 quiet, but they did their business as teaching.
11 Teaching is a big word for our people. All of the
12 tribes that you go visit, you'll find that out.
13 What means and what's important? Land, water, and
14 the life in the water, life on the land that can't
15 be spoken for, the animals. I'm going to send a lot
16 of these pages to you folks to answer some of the
17 questions because all those questions are still on
18 the table on my Board of Trustees governing body and
19 the general counsel.

20 And we have the general counsel chairman
21 on our Board of Trustees. We will address it as the
22 best we can to work with you, to have those concerns
23 of the ways of life of tribal nations. Tribal
24 nations I believe is the key word that need to be
25 recognized and respected, and to be visited. We

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1 live in the United States. We're citizens of the
2 United States since the '40s. And I'd like to thank
3 you folks for listening to us.

4 And we will have comments that we're going
5 to return, I guess, by the date you -- they set for
6 us. And I want to thank all these tribe that I've
7 heard that they need the respect to have somebody
8 like you, important people to go see you. We
9 respect your leadership, for us, to make these laws
10 complete and speaking for us. Finding a way, we can
11 find a way. We're willing to help, just need a
12 helping hand to get us to where we want to be.

13 Most of the time the bureau did help us,
14 and I expect them to do that and to continue it.
15 There's no end in everybody's life. The circuit of
16 life goes on and on. The circle has no end. Each
17 one of these tribal nations, they teach their
18 children the importance of cultural and tradition
19 and that's good to hear. We are all the nations of
20 the United States. And I believe that, if you could
21 reach out and go visit these tribal nations, you'd
22 understand them better, by seeing and listening and
23 what their beliefs are.

24 Believing in something that's been there
25 for thousands of years, that's what they're asking.

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1 And that's what I'm asking. Come out and see what
2 we've accomplished. Some of the treaties, they --
3 when help civilize us, civilize. We're learning
4 here. We don't have a curve. Like a lot of the
5 Indians say, "Indian time." We'll do it when we
6 feel it's right. We don't want to rush into things.
7 We're going to have to look at it.

8 What words are they seeking? Like still
9 there's distrust. What else is -- what strings are
10 attached to these questions? And that's all right.
11 Thank you for listening to me. I talked for the
12 Confederate Tribes, our Board of Trustees, our
13 council member from the general council. I will go
14 back and tell them what I said and what I heard.
15 I'm really proud of what I heard from the
16 reservations from Alaska and here.

17 You guys deserve that title of Tribal
18 Nations. In fact, I demand it. We're already
19 written on paper. How long? Till the end of time.
20 Thank you.

21 KYLE VINT: Thank you, Chairman.
22 Chairwoman Erica M. Pinto.

23 ERICA PINTO: Bryan told me to wait until
24 he comes back, but I'm just going to jump right into
25 it.

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1 Good afternoon. My name is Erica Pinto.
2 I have the honor to serve as tribal chairwoman for
3 my tribe, the Jamul Indian Village of California.
4 Thank you for allowing me to come here and testify.
5 And thank you for being here today even though
6 travels make you tired today. I -- I get it.

7 While we are supportive of this
8 administration's efforts to promote efficiency in
9 government administration, we're deeply concerned
10 that the path charted toward this goal is violating
11 the United States' Trust responsibility to tribes,
12 harming tribal governments and our people. Indian
13 country is being unintentionally swept up in the
14 administration's broad implementation of its policy
15 priorities.

16 There he is.

17 The administration has set forth policies,
18 priorities, such as eliminating DEI initiatives and
19 reducing federal fraud and waste that are not
20 directed at Indian country. Yet, Indian country has
21 been inadvertently harmed because the
22 administration's implementation actions are so
23 broad. Tribal nations have been locked out of
24 federal payment system accounts and unable to access
25 federal funds we rely on.

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 146</p> <p>1 We have lost federal employees who have 2 years of experience and deep relations with our 3 tribal communities and our government contracts, 4 grants and agreements have been terminated with 5 little explanation. To name just a few impacts, but 6 tribal programs fall into the carve-outs the 7 administration built into its executive orders which 8 protect direct services to individuals, essential 9 programs, public safety programs, and activities 10 implementing legal requirements.</p> <p>11 The federal government's diffused and 12 varied methods for delivery on its trust and treaty 13 obligations to Indian country. Meaning it can be 14 hard for the new administration to identify tribal 15 programs that fall into these carve-outs. Tribal 16 programs are not like federal programs. Tribal 17 programs deliver on the United States, it's trust 18 and treaty obligations to tribal nations and tribal 19 citizens and communities which we prepaid or with 20 our lands, our lives, and our resources.</p> <p>21 The tribal -- the US Supreme Court has 22 said, "United States actions that deliver on these 23 trust and treaty obligations are not 24 unconstitutionally race-based, but instead are 25 political in nature." Tribal nations are and always</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 148</p> <p>1 governments and their enterprises directly employed 2 almost 350,000 workers, a lot. And directly 3 supported an additional 600,000 jobs and generated 4 40 billion per year in wages and benefits, along 5 with an additional nine billion spillover impact on 6 state and regional economies. Once the 7 administration takes steps to protect existing 8 tribal programs from inadvertent harm, we can focus 9 our energies on pursuing shared goals together.</p> <p>10 We have four requests that we believe will 11 protect existing tribal programs. First of all, all 12 federal agencies should engage in tribal 13 consultation prior to taking action to better 14 understand how our programs fit into the 15 administration's carve-outs. We can help the 16 administration understand where within the federal 17 government direct and essential services and funding 18 are being provided to Indian country and how to 19 implement the administration's policy priorities 20 without affecting ongoing legal requirements to 21 Indian country.</p> <p>22 Second, we ask that the White House 23 affirmatively state in writing that federal programs 24 and funding delivered to tribal nations and tribal 25 citizens and communities are delivered in</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 147</p> <p>1 have been inherently sovereign governments. We 2 govern and police our lands, and we provide 3 governmental services aimed at keeping our community 4 safe and healthy.</p> <p>5 Tribal nations have strong political 6 relationships with the tribal citizens and community 7 members, and we have political and government-to- 8 government relationships with United States. The US 9 Constitution singles out tribal nations and native 10 people as unique. We have important shared 11 priorities that we would like to pursue in 12 partnership with the administration, but we have 13 been using all our energy to protect existing 14 programs from inadvertent harm.</p> <p>15 President Trump has long recognized Indian 16 country as a strong partner. We share a 17 foundational understanding that local communities 18 are best suited to address their people's needs, and 19 that the bureaucratic red tape prevents effective 20 local governments -- governance. The exercise of 21 tribal sovereignty is as good as it gets. Tribal 22 nations are proven governmental and economic 23 partners to surrounding communities.</p> <p>24 At the end of the first Trump term, 25 conservative estimates indicated that the tribal</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 149</p> <p>1 recognition of our unique political status and in 2 furtherance of the United States' trust and treaty 3 obligations.</p> <p>4 We note and appreciate that some federal 5 agencies, including Department of Health and Human 6 Services, the Interior and Housing and Urban 7 Development, have individually acknowledged in 8 writing that implementation of the administration's 9 policy priorities should not impact delivery on 10 trust and treaty obligations such as delivery is not 11 race-based.</p> <p>12 Third, we ask that all federal agencies 13 exempt from each pause or reduction in federal 14 funding, all tribal programs and funding delivered 15 to tribal nation, including through urban Indian 16 organizations and tribal organizations serving 17 tribal nations.</p> <p>18 Last, we ask that all federal agencies 19 exempt from each workforce reduction or hiring 20 freeze on all federal employees and positions in 21 tribal offices whose roles is to -- are to assist in 22 delivery of services or distribution of funding to 23 tribal nations, tribal citizens in our communities. 24 Specifically in my tribe at Jamul, an example that 25 we have are threats to the tribal General Assistance</p>

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1 Program, GAP. It's essential to capacity building
2 for tribal environmental programs.
3 These programs act as liaisons between
4 tribal nations EPA. GAP has been fundamentally in
5 -- fundamental in developing my tribe's
6 environmental programs, which is essential for
7 protecting the public health and natural resources.
8 GAP funding is not only benefited my tribe, but also
9 the community around us. GAP funding is threatened
10 by the policy priorities of this administration.
11 Another example is the threat -- the threat to
12 tribal historic preservation officer funding.
13 My tribe's THPO provides essential
14 services advocating for our interests related to
15 development of projects across our homelands. I
16 won't say ancestral homelands, because they still
17 are our homelands like the gentleman from Alaska
18 said this morning. My THPO's expertise will become
19 even more important as this administration seeks to
20 expedite historic and environmental review
21 processes. However, her salary is supported by the
22 historic preservation fund.
23 Distribution of the historic preservation
24 funds for FY25 have been delayed and HPF has been
25 earmarked for elimination in the president's

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1 discretionary budget request for FY26. Because the
2 historic preservation fund is often the sole source
3 of our funding for THPOs of many tribes including
4 ours, may be forced to terminate our THPO program.
5 This will slow down the NHPA review process and make
6 it difficult for tribal nations to protect our
7 interests and cultural resources.
8 Finally, Bryan, I know you mentioned this
9 this morning. We're very concerned about the rumors
10 about the potential closure or consolidation of
11 interior field offices. And I heard what you said
12 this morning, and it could be just a rumor, but in
13 addition to serving as my tribe's chairwoman, I
14 serve as the chairwoman for the California Tribal
15 Chairpersons Association representing over 80
16 tribes, federally recognized tribes.
17 And I know from experience how difficult
18 it is to represent all tribes interests
19 simultaneously and we developed systems our own --
20 in our own organization, such as, dividing into
21 regions. You have the southern, you have the
22 northern, and the central regions to respond to
23 these differences. Interiors California regional
24 office is already overworked and understaffed and
25 they face similar representing -- challenges

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1 representing the interest of all 109 tribes,
2 simultaneously.
3 So consolidation or closure of these
4 California region offices would be devastating for
5 tribal nations. So I -- I talked about putting
6 things in writing because I -- I do as an American
7 Indian person, have trust issues. And I -- I would
8 love to see those in writing. It may be a dear
9 tribal leader letter that, you know, these will not
10 be consolidated because the understaffing, the
11 underfunding, the regional consolidations would
12 impact all of our tribes.
13 And like I said in my comments, we have
14 issues already accessing those fundings. They're
15 frozen. You know, people are being terminated, let
16 go. And this isn't an effort to make everything
17 more efficient, but that is going the opposite way.
18 It will not make it more efficient. It will make it
19 more detrimental and harm all of us. So I ask each
20 of you to do your best and -- and making sure that
21 we are not impacted already.
22 We're already a vulnerable population.
23 And I have other comments that I would like to put
24 in writing, but just transparency -- I ask for
25 transparency. I -- I ask that we put decision

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1 makers in the room. I'm also a -- a primary
2 delegate for the Secretary of Tribal Advisory
3 Committee for DOI, but also Department of Health &
4 Human Services.
5 And when you have the decisionmakers in
6 the room -- I think we were supposed to meet with
7 Dogon and we didn't, that fell through the -- the
8 cracks somewhere but it would be nice if they could
9 hear this too from us as well. Just that respect of
10 tribal sovereignty, the government-to-government
11 relationship that we have, the unique political
12 status that we have as tribes and for the US
13 government to really uphold their trust and treaty
14 responsibilities.
15 And I know you hear that often and often,
16 but I want to just drive that home and make sure
17 that, you know, this administration and all to come
18 will understand that there is an obligation till the
19 end of time. It's not till, you know, two
20 administrations out or five years. It is till the
21 end of time. It is in perpetuity that we have this
22 unique relationship with our government. So with
23 that, I will end my comments and I appreciate the
24 time. And -- and thank you all for being here.
25 KYLE VINT: Thank you, Chairwoman.

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1 We'll invite Chairman Garth Sundberg.
2 GARTH SUNDBERG: Afternoon. My name's
3 Garth Sundberg. I'm the chairman of Trinidad
4 Rancheria. And I agree with everything Chairwoman
5 Pinto said. So I don't really have to say anything,
6 but anyway, I'm all for efficiency. I mean, I know
7 government doesn't work fast and -- and I'm in
8 business, and if I worked that way, I'd be broke.
9 But my biggest thing is our government-to-
10 government consultation wasn't done and is -- we're
11 doing it now. My biggest gripe is that, you know,
12 all this money the tribes do -- to try to build our
13 roads. And Kevin knows what our roads are in
14 Northern California's terrible. And we spent all
15 that money in there, and then we get a grant, and
16 then they pull the grant away from us.
17 So now we got no money and bad roads. So
18 hopefully we could get that money back someday. I'm
19 looking forward anyway. And -- and I agree with
20 everything all in the tribes say too. I mean, we
21 really have to do a lot of changes. I've been here
22 in this business for 28 years now, and it's still
23 the same, but I, you know, hopefully I don't come
24 back in a couple more years and talk about the same
25 thing. So, anyway.

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1 KYLE VINT: Thank you, Chairman.
2 It looks like we have Vice Chairman Robert
3 Hempstead.
4 ROBERT HEMPSTEAD: (Native language
5 spoken.) Robert Hempstead, Vice Chairman, Trinidad
6 Rancheria. Fortunately I signed up late enough that
7 I can echo what everybody has said in the room.
8 It's being said for a reason though. Right? I
9 mean, it's -- it's the continual process that
10 government seemed -- the federal government seems to
11 continually use.
12 And I say that as, privileged enough to
13 represent my community for the last 12, 13, 14,
14 somewhere in there, as being on tribal council,
15 young, not knowing anything, just learning and
16 listening. And the continue -- continual process
17 that I keep seeing is government-to-government,
18 let's have the consult, and there's not a
19 consultation. Have already been made. The process
20 has already been started.
21 It doesn't matter whether it's here or
22 whether it's with BOEM, whether it's with climate
23 change, the windmills, any of it. Right? It -- it
24 goes back to far hundreds of years ago, really.
25 That's -- that's the playbook, I guess, right, that

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1 the federal government uses. That's the change
2 we're looking for. Right? The actual voice, the
3 actual -- actual seat at the table, whether it's
4 with a true decision-making and true conversations,
5 back and forth that actually has dialogue that means
6 something.
7 Or, you know, the seat at the table and
8 working in partnership aspects or whatever else that
9 may be. But we're all, I guess very similar
10 complaints, very similar issues. And we see it
11 because of how societal norms form in communities.
12 Right? And we're all trying to help, and we're all
13 elected to stand up and try to help our people. And
14 that's the oath that I took to my community, what
15 everybody else has done. The -- the -- the roads
16 that were mentioned, it was an emergency.
17 It slid out. It was a road that was a
18 state road. State didn't want to maintain it. So
19 they hunt it down to the county. Right? County
20 can't maintain it, they keep it. However, I was
21 told a couple years ago, it went back to be on the
22 federal roads. So it was supposed to be under
23 emergency response for repair. We go, we get a
24 grant, we have the assessment. We're -- we're given
25 the okay. We're -- we're told it's -- we have

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1 grants that's approved. Go fix this road.
2 Fire engineers get the -- procure the
3 emergency road permit, right. Pay engineers, MSC
4 walls, we're told it's held up. Why'd you tell us
5 to go ahead and do all this? Tribe didn't have the
6 money to spend. Right? We -- we brought that up at
7 the tribal nations grant fund or tribal nation's
8 summit, right, a couple months ago with you. You
9 said couple pages, type it up, get it to the office.
10 That did nothing.
11 That's unfortunate. Still held up, still
12 have a road. That is the only way to get in and out
13 of our ranch area of boundaries that could fall out.
14 Right? As stop signs, water lines are breaking,
15 whole slope destabilization. Problem. Everyone
16 here is tasked to do something. Right? You guys
17 have your tasks, your marching orders that you're
18 receiving. I understand that.
19 And once again, there is the trust and
20 treaty responsibilities, and they should be
21 acknowledged. But we need to find a way to work
22 together and be able to keep working forward. I
23 love to help people, when I'm -- what I'm here on
24 this earth to do. But we as tribes, as the United
25 States of America, the federal government, right,

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1 because I pay taxes, I'm a citizen still of the
2 United States.

3 I would like to see the funds, you know,
4 go towards our people, help the tribes, to help the
5 communities. Where we -- this is not the place to
6 be cutting in a budget, not through BIA. It's not
7 through -- when 20 percent, pretty much of the
8 tribes, federally recognized tribes, reside just in
9 California themselves -- itself, right, or 18 if
10 you're trying to be -- or somewhere in there.
11 Right?

12 I mean, 100 plus tribes of 590 or
13 something. It's like you have to have the offices
14 here. You have to put capacity here. This is not
15 the place to make cuts. And I hope you guys hear
16 that. I mean, we'll get our comments in and all of
17 that. I guess I'm more so just ranting up here.
18 But they're true issues that everyone has, you know.
19 And I know you're listening, but I hope you truly do
20 hear us.

21 I -- you're a tribal member yourself and
22 you grew up. I'm sure you see the same issues take
23 place up there that we all have. So we're all
24 trying to make it better. Right? Thank you for
25 everyone's time. And then I think there's five

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1 tribes in the local area. Normally we do begin with
2 our opening prayers and start that negotiations and
3 the meetings in a good way -- really respectful in a
4 really good way and stuff.

5 And I was like hearing that because -- and
6 it's -- it's really nice to come down here. I
7 always learn a lot about the local community tribes
8 and appreciate everyone's time. Thank you. Have a
9 good day.

10 BRYAN MERCIER: So, Robert, I -- I do want
11 to follow up on the -- I believe it was a bill and
12 IRA funding that was frozen, and it was at the
13 Tribal Interior Budget Committee. I -- I don't
14 believe I've seen it in main interior.

15 So Ryan, I'm going to ask you to find out
16 where -- if you all submitted a justification, where
17 it may have gotten hung up in the Pacific Regional
18 Office, because I don't think I've seen yours come
19 to us. So unfortunately, what has happened and it's
20 actually pretty common when there's a change in
21 administrations, is that inflight projects undergo a
22 programmatic review.

23 This administration has decided it's going
24 to review all BIL and IRA grants that were granted
25 in the last two years that had not been obligated.

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1 So these projects got caught up in that. But we
2 have been shaking them loose. We just need a short
3 justification. And this sounds like this is a
4 public safety issue, and the public safety ones have
5 been getting released.

6 So I -- we just need to -- I don't know
7 where we got lost with the -- with the paperwork,
8 but let's -- you know, so I'll ask Ryan, the acting
9 regional director, to follow up and make sure that
10 we get it in main interior to us. Yeah. Real
11 quick.

12 PUBLIC COMMENTER: -- and it was through
13 the BIA Office of Emergency Services in Washington
14 DC, Jason is his first name. And he -- it came
15 through a continuing resolution. It was part of
16 that. And I got word from the Office of Self-
17 Governance that it was obligated. It's somewhere
18 between self-governance and assistant secretary
19 approval. It -- it was in that Washington DC link.
20 I'm happy to follow up with Ryan.

21 BRYAN MERCIER: Okay. So it sounds like
22 it's not BIL and IRA funds. It was -- it was
23 emergency services funds. Jason Steinmetz is the
24 national director of our Office of Emergency
25 Services. So yeah, I have -- I'm -- have not seen

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1 that. So when we get back to DC or even to this
2 evening, we'll shake it loose from OSG and get it
3 before Scott Davis, who's the exercising authority
4 of assistant secretary, to get him to sign. And
5 we'll get those funds into asap so you all can draw
6 those down. Okay. Thank you for that.

7 KYLE VINT: Thank you.

8 I'm going to invite Angela -- Chairwoman
9 Angela-Elliott Santos.

10 ANGELA-ELLIOTT SANTOS: Okay, everyone.
11 Before I start, I can't stand up here and share my
12 thoughts with everyone without first asking for a
13 recognition for every American Indian person in this
14 country, since contact that has been failed by the
15 federal government that has either lost their lives
16 or spent their entire life waiting for a house or
17 waiting for emergency services.

18 While this justification that we're asking
19 to be given, we've tried to give that, and yet we
20 are still waiting. So I'm going to pause here for
21 10 seconds while we think about all the people who
22 have been harmed before this consultation or any of
23 the others.

24 I just want them all to know that they
25 have not been forgotten. And that that is the

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1 reason why we stand up here and say the same things
2 over and over again, even though I believe that's
3 the definition of insanity, but I don't think we're
4 insane. I think we're resilient and unmovable
5 and unshakeable. That our resilience will never go
6 away no matter how many times we have to say these
7 things.

8 I do hope, and when I pray and I talk to
9 the ancestors, I hope my great-great-grandchildren
10 are not standing here saying the same things,
11 waiting for the same thing to be considered human,
12 to be given what they were promised. As we stand
13 here -- and I'm not a lawyer, I know lawyers. I
14 hear legal speak all the time. The one thing I
15 can't understand is how the federal government can
16 ignore its own laws.

17 When I go talk at -- at HHS meetings or
18 IHS meetings, there was a lawsuit, Rincon Tribe,
19 Purchase and Referred Care. There was a court
20 order. Never upheld, but yet as someone said here,
21 "Boy, we better not forget our 425s and all of the
22 hoops that we have to jump through." But court
23 orders can be denied. Treaties can be denied.

24 Buried in a bill somewhere years ago was a
25 recognition by Congress that per capita, more of our

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1 people have stood with the United States and fought
2 in all the wars, and let's say helped win them too.
3 But in Indian Health Services, they don't spend as
4 much as they -- as this government spends on a
5 prisoner. So these things have been said before.

6 I'm going to say them again, and please
7 don't take my tone as anything personal to you all,
8 just a message that has to be said over and over
9 again. And I too have all these written comments
10 and we will submit them. And I feel that they will
11 fall on deaf ears because these things have been
12 decided, no matter what's been said.

13 What kind of efficiency is it -- I -- I
14 wonder if there is a number on how many Indian
15 people have stood up and given consultation. How
16 many government-to-government consultations have
17 there been? And how many times have people from
18 tribes, leaders, asked for the same thing?
19 Streamline process, all these things that are being
20 said to us now in a hurry. "Hurry up now."

21 Guess what, we're going to do all these
22 things and it's all the things you've ever wanted.
23 No. It's not. In disguise this is all the things
24 that we don't want because it never started with
25 consultation with us first. It started with an

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1 idea. And something, as everyone has said here,
2 doesn't even affect us.

3 We shouldn't have to jump through these
4 DEI issues and these hoops because we are in fact
5 sovereign nations who never get treated like
6 sovereign nations. So my main point, and it was
7 said here, the same word I wanted to use, we're
8 always an afterthought, whether it's in local
9 government, whether it's in environmental laws,
10 whether it's in health laws.

11 No matter what it is, we are an
12 afterthought. Always left out. Further
13 dehumanization of our people. I don't know when
14 that's going to stop. I don't know how to say these
15 things in any different way. I don't know what tone
16 to say them into. I don't know who to submit these
17 things to. And I don't know when this will ever
18 change, but I'm going to stand here and I guess I'll
19 read some of these again and you can hear them again
20 and again.

21 And we can call this efficiency.
22 Efficiency when the people that you're asking the
23 questions of say the same things over and over and
24 over again to no end. And -- and I will say though,
25 yes, there have been some steps that make things

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1 easier. There have been some actions that have made
2 it easier for our people, but for the most part, our
3 people are still dehumanized.

4 Last on the list, our kids had to live
5 with -- during, I don't know what political thing it
6 was on the TV, it said oh, you know, all the races
7 and something else, something other. That's what
8 our kids live with, the dehumanization that as
9 Sovereign Nations, 574 sovereign nations, within the
10 United States. But we're still something else,
11 something other.

12 We don't even deserve a name. So I -- I
13 -- I -- like I said, I don't know, and I -- I -- I
14 do, I apologize again because I know you can all
15 feel my emotions because this is real life. I have
16 seven grandchildren and I want to look at them and
17 tell them, yes, things are better and they're going
18 to keep getting better. And yes, we're recognized,
19 but you know, that's -- that's not what they're
20 seeing.

21 That's not what my grandkids see when they
22 go to one of the poorest school districts in San
23 Diego County. And, you know, it's not just our
24 people that are forgotten in that area. All the
25 people that live on that mountain are forgotten. So

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 166</p> <p>1 I'd even like to speak for them because our schools 2 suffer. We are in a food desert. The closest 3 grocery store is 30 miles to us. 4 And I know for people in Alaska that 5 sounds like, oh no, I'm sorry -- and I'm sorry to 6 say that. But for us, 30 miles feels like if you 7 don't have a car and you can't get there, then I 8 guess you get the head of lettuce that the guy at 9 the little mini market bought two weeks ago in town 10 and -- and brought up. So these things, they are 11 real. 12 And whether you're in California or Alaska 13 or anywhere, tribes are always in the poorest 14 places, with the least amount of resources. Where I 15 live, they -- we have one officer for how many 16 square miles. And then the county also releases 17 sexually violent criminals in our area and then 18 says, "Sorry, you don't have enough law enforcement. 19 But if something happens, then we'll -- you know, 20 we'll try to get there as soon as that officer is 21 available." 22 So I'll try to stay on task. For those 23 that know me, I will talk forever. And then Erica 24 will tell me to sit down. So as you guys already 25 know, Indian affairs programs are already operating</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 168</p> <p>1 Everyone in this room knows what Indian country 2 needs, and that's why I got so upset at the IHS 3 consultation because they said, "We need more tribal 4 leaders to get up and tell us what you need." 5 Except for -- I've been on the Tribal Council since 6 1998, my father got elected to be the chair then, 7 and I followed him all around. And he said the same 8 things that I'm saying. 9 And so this idea that -- and I will tell 10 you what this feels like to me. Being rushed. 11 Being pushed off on us. And no matter what we say 12 to you, it's going to happen anyway. And I hope you 13 prove me wrong. And I hope you realize that 14 whatever does happen, we're not going to be quiet. 15 We're not going to just watch it happen and sink 16 back into the pages of the history that they're 17 trying to write us out of. 18 Whatever you all decide to do, we're still 19 going to be here. We're going to still come with 20 our insane talk. Same thing over and over again. 21 Until I'm in the ground, I will not stop. And I 22 will not stop because my ancestors did give their 23 blood, my ancestors paid in advance. And I don't 24 want that to happen. I don't want my grandchildren 25 to have to pay with their blood or with more wasted</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 167</p> <p>1 with inadequate staffing and support. We in -- we 2 are concerned that there's no plan to respond to 3 diminished capacity and federal government needs 4 adequate to -- to adequate people in order to 5 deliver upon its legal obligations to Indian 6 country. 7 One of the other bigger things that 8 Manzanita requests, Indian Affairs require 9 consultation with affected tribes before approving 10 any projects under these alternative arrangements. 11 Regardless of whether significant impacts are 12 initially anticipated. Sorry, I guess I jumped into 13 the NIPA stuff, but this is a big issue for us as 14 people have talked about homelands. 15 Our homelands include San Diego, the city 16 is the heart of our homelands. We go all the way 17 down into Baja and into Imperial County. We didn't 18 get any of that land, but it is still our homelands. 19 We are still connected to it, and the resources that 20 are around it are very important to us still to this 21 day. So these are big issues. You know, I think I 22 am going to just submit most of these comments about 23 the -- about -- from your letter in -- in writing. 24 What I wanted to get across to you was, 25 you've heard these things, you know what we need.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 169</p> <p>1 time saying the same thing over and over again. 2 You all know what Indian country needs. 3 We need more actions like self-governance, but real 4 self-governance. We need our governments to have a 5 real place at the table. I tell them all that all 6 the time. Not the kids' table at Thanksgiving, the 7 real table. And even though some say we've been 8 invited there, we never have been there. 9 As was said, the decision-makers are not 10 here to meet with us in a true government-to- 11 government consultation. Thank you all, and thank 12 you for enduring my words. 13 KYLE VINT: Thank you, Chairwoman. 14 Chairman Simon. 15 MOKE SIMON: Camera adds a couple pounds, 16 right? Anyway, lighten it up. (Native language 17 spoken) Moke Simon, Tribal Chairman, Middletown 18 Rancheria, (native language spoken) people. We are 19 the lake people. You know, I want to -- you know, I 20 am humbled and honored to stand in front of each one 21 of the tribal leaders here, or representatives for 22 the tribes. The ones on the line. 23 If you don't know mooch, I don't know 24 where you've been for the past 28 years. But I've 25 done this for 28 years too. Little history on</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 170</p> <p>1 myself. Became a young leader. You know, I was 2 lucky enough. Got to play in the NFL, you know, 3 coming off of res. I got to -- I got to do a bunch 4 of neat things. Be the first Native American 5 elected in Lake County's history. 6 Built down 100 years after we were 7 actually made people, you know, in the eyes of the 8 state of California. Now there's another tribal 9 representative. We had two, first one in 10 California's history where you have two people on 11 the board of supervisors that are native. So 12 understanding the federal government, the state 13 government, local government, and all these things, 14 has been something that I really took to heart the 15 first day I took office and was asked to be a 16 leader. 17 I never wanted to be a leader of the 18 tribe. I wanted to do my own thing, do my stuff 19 somehow. You know, just like in football, you need 20 to be prepared to step up when you're asked to do 21 that. So I did. For years I've been advocating 22 some of the folks in this room. Sometimes they're 23 on my side, sometimes they're not. But I don't 24 care. I'm a leader of my tribe, my people. 25 My job is to make generational change.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 172</p> <p>1 anything has changed because it hasn't. Healthcare, 2 can't count on you for healthcare. Yeah, we got 3 tribal health, we got those things. But you know 4 what we got to do? We got to earn money as a tribal 5 nation, has a sovereign government and economic 6 development to take care of our people. And that's 7 what we do. 8 We don't have enough resources to go 9 around. But you know what we do? We buy insurance 10 for each one of our members so they don't got to beg 11 the federal government or other agencies to help us. 12 So I come at you in a different direction, probably 13 than everybody else. I figure right now, the 14 federal government owes my tribe about \$816 million. 15 That's what I want from you guys. 16 I want to check to show up to my door and 17 you won't see me no more. I'll just ask to do your 18 job. When I send in an application for roads, an 19 application for trust land. I won't come and beg for 20 a grant that is pennies on the dollar to do what we 21 need to do. Give us the \$816 million to Middletown. 22 You'll see the shining light that we bring to our 23 communities, our county, and our people. And I'll 24 prove that. 25 We'll be one of those. I think you guys</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 171</p> <p>1 And the federal government is going to do what it's 2 going to do whatever administration comes through. 3 You guys are going to do whatever you're going to 4 do. You have your job to do. All I ask is that you 5 do it. You know, I've heard the word trust. 6 There's no trust. I -- I don't want to use it. 7 Treaty responsibilities. None. 8 One part of one of the 18 treaties here in 9 California that were never ratified, first 10 legislators in the state of California said you gave 11 them too much. Don't ratify those. Seal them away. 12 Don't do it. You know, there's too much gold, 13 there's too much land, too much resources. So we've 14 been fighting that battle forever, and we'll 15 continue. I -- I heard a leader just say, "Hope for 16 grandkids." 17 Our grandkids will be here saying the same 18 thing. Same thing. And that's a reality. So I 19 come at you in a different direction. Just ask you 20 to do your job. I've heard my entire career was 21 going to be easier to put land into trust. Haven't 22 seen it yet. Not yet. Not one bit of change. And 23 I -- and I've been a leader the whole time. So 24 who's been doing it? Me. 25 So no one across those tables can say</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 173</p> <p>1 should look back on how you guys treat Indian 2 people. I was the chair of Lake County Board of 3 Supervisors and the chair of the tribe during the 4 world pandemic. Oh man, that was not cool. Did not 5 know if we were going to survive. I lost my father 6 to COVID. So it was -- it -- we were hit on every 7 way you could be hit. But what we did is we got on 8 the phone, we did those things. 9 We were able to bring in large sum of 10 funds so RPRUM (phonetic) cares. You know what we 11 did? We wrote the program to spend those dollars 12 correctly. No one told us what to do. We did it. 13 We knew what our people needed, and we took care of 14 it. Sick of this federal government always trying 15 to tell us what to do with our money or the state. 16 So I'm the guy from Middletown and hopefully other 17 tribes. 18 Just do your job and we'll do ours as 19 leaders and take care of our people. It's really 20 that simple. It really is that god darn simple. 21 Don't forget that number, 816 million. That's what 22 you owe my people. That's what you owe all 272 23 tribal members of the Cahto people. And you won't 24 see me coming over here and asking for little 25 \$50,000 grant for roads.</p>

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1 Money we can't even use. Every one of the
2 grants that you give us say it has to be for low
3 income. So stay poor and if you do anything good
4 for your people, you can't even use the dollars
5 we're giving you. Well, I come at it at a different
6 direction. There's a guy in the White House right
7 now that said, he's the dealmaker. I'm willing to
8 make the deal. Let's talk.
9 We're a sovereign nation, just as these
10 other countries are at war and other things right
11 now. Pay us for our resources, what we've given
12 already. I'll make the deal. Let's talk about it.
13 Sick of begging, I won't do it anymore. My job is
14 to lead our people in the right direction to help
15 collaborate with other tribal leaders. But no more.
16 This is the generation.
17 We're going to change it. You'll get to
18 get your payroll and your jobs. You need us more
19 than we need you. I'll tell you that much. You
20 wouldn't have a job without us, correct? There you
21 go. That's Smoke Simon's comments, probably get
22 hassled or someone will be mad because I said it.
23 But it's not going to go away because federal
24 government has never stood up to its
25 responsibilities.

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1 It's not going to change in the future.
2 Let us do what we do, lead our people into a better
3 place, and we know what to do. So that's all I'm
4 asking for. \$816 million, not a \$269,000 638
5 contract. That doesn't do anything for us. You
6 know, little pennies, little dollars, more
7 reporting, 425 forms, audits, all this other stuff.
8 We're a sovereign nation. Done begging. Done.
9 You've got blood, you got life, you got
10 land, you got resources from us. This is the
11 generation we're going to change it. Not off of
12 gaming, not anything else. Just do your job when we
13 put those applications in front of you for land and
14 the trust. And that's all I need from you. So
15 that's it.
16 KYLE VINT: Thank you, Chairman.
17 Chairman Bean?
18 BRYAN MERCIER: Just if anyone's asking --
19 if anyone's asking -- for a few bucks too.
20 KYLE VINT: Yeah. Mike? Yeah, if you
21 twist the -- the pole there and drop it, that'd be
22 great.
23 MIKE JONES: I'm not that big football
24 player. Yeah. Okay. How's that?
25 FRED BEAN: (Native language spoken.)

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1 Fred Bean, North Lake Rancheria Tribal Chairman.
2 We're a tribe of about 3,000 members. We're a
3 landless tribe. So we don't have reservation.
4 We're -- we're one of those people that kind of our
5 own fault. We hid, we ran, we stayed up in those
6 mountains down in the valley. They couldn't catch
7 us. They tried years and years. And here we are.
8 We're still here. We're always going to
9 be here. So -- so going last, there was a lot of
10 comments today that fortunately I got to just cross
11 off my list. That was very cool. A lot of -- I
12 appreciate all the tribal leaders and the things
13 they're saying today. There's some really, really
14 good stuff that you really do need to hear.
15 And again, it's a lot of the same old
16 stuff over and over and over. And we're going to --
17 we're here today. We were here before. We'll be
18 here in the future saying the same things. One
19 small topic that I want to touch on at our tribe is
20 probate and land titles. Again, I mentioned that
21 we're a landless tribe. There are -- there are some
22 -- some trust lands that are private family.
23 And so it seems like through the years,
24 for some reason, it changes when somebody passes on.
25 And one -- for a few years, it seems to go -- it's

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1 going to go next to kin. Then other times it not --
2 it doesn't go next to kin, just the owners that are
3 still remaining they're the owners. That's it.
4 Some reason that seems to change through the years.
5 And so when people come to ask us for
6 help, you know, we try to go to you guys and say,
7 you know, "What is it now?" And it seems like there
8 should be policy somewhere actual written how it
9 works. And it seems to change. And that's -- the
10 reason I wanted to touch on that is, you know, we're
11 here talking about consultation and is it
12 meaningful. Right?
13 The short notice kind of shows, you know,
14 is it -- is it truly? And BIA is here to serve all
15 of Indian country, and it comes to these land
16 things. You know, we -- we have family. I have
17 family members that are our tribes. Some of them
18 belong to non-recognized tribes. And BIA serves all
19 Indian country. So if we're truly trying to help
20 all Indian country, we appreciate the tribal leaders
21 being here of the federally recognized tribes.
22 But it goes beyond that. You know, like I
23 said, we have family members, you know, I -- in the
24 tribes and non-recognized tribes. And there's --
25 there's many of those people that are affected with

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1 all the benefits of BIA. And so, all of us, not
2 just the federally recognized tribes, but non-
3 recognized tribes and people that aren't even in --
4 in those non-recognized tribes, Indian country needs
5 your help.

6 And, you know, most of us, we are opposed
7 to the cutbacks because like it was mentioned
8 earlier, you know, we don't need less. We need a
9 lot more, a lot more. You know, it was mentioned
10 one third cut. We need two thirds more. It's --
11 it's even more than that. Goes a long way to help
12 our people and all people. So I just kind of wanted
13 to touch on that, you know. The true consultation,
14 you know, is it real?

15 Is it -- are we truly looking for
16 solutions? You know, the short consultation to us,
17 you know, are you really looking for solutions?
18 Have you reached out to the non-recognized tribes?
19 All of Indian country, there's a lot of bigger
20 Indian countries than just federally recognized
21 tribes. And they all have a say and they all need
22 help.

23 I know the issues are, -- you know, we're
24 asking if the decisionmakers are in the room, you
25 know, and no disrespect to you. It works the same

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1 way for us as tribal leaders. We're here speaking
2 for our people. So we come with a message, you
3 know, and this is the message. And like Chairman
4 Nieto said earlier today, you know, that, you know,
5 we come with a message.

6 We get, "Yay, sounds good. Glad to hear
7 your comments." Then we get home and we're told no,
8 you know, the same thing. You know, we're trying to
9 give -- deliver a message, and we're representing
10 our people. We give that message to you. You take
11 that message, you know, to DC, you know. And again,
12 I -- I mean, no disrespect or belittlement, but you
13 know, when we give that message to you and then you
14 go speak in DC are you just the token Indian in the
15 room?

16 Is it -- is it really going to matter? Is
17 the decision-makers really going to listen? Because
18 here we are again saying it again over and over and
19 over. So that message has been delivered before,
20 but who's hearing it? Who's really making a
21 decision on that? So, you know, we stand behind you
22 to take that message for us, but really being heard,
23 you know, and we want to know that too, you know?

24 So that feedback to us would help because
25 we're here. Everybody here is taking their time.

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1 You know, everybody's busy -- got busy things -- a
2 lot of things to do to serve our people, to come and
3 deliver these messages. You know, is it
4 meaningless? Is there a point? You know, we
5 appreciate that you take that, but the feedback to
6 let us know is -- are they really hearing you?

7 Are they listening? Are they thinking
8 about it? Or are they just, you know, playing all
9 of us, you know? Yeah, they will hear, but coming
10 back. So, you know, and it's like a lot of things,
11 you know, again the government, you know, we have to
12 hear the government approve stuff. You know, they
13 -- we're tribes, we should be able to make these
14 decisions. You know, they approve the gaming.

15 They approve the land stuff. They even
16 have to approve to recognize us as a tribe. There's
17 other tribes out there still trying to be noticed.
18 And, you know, we don't need that. We're Indian
19 country. We know who we are. We know our families.
20 You know, we don't need the US government to tell us
21 who we are and to approve things.

22 So those are the kinds of things that, you
23 know, Indian countries trying to be self-sustaining.
24 And you know, it -- it doesn't happen without the
25 help of each other, the help of our families, your

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1 help. So I just want to say thank you for hearing
2 us out. Thank you for carrying that message. We do
3 stand behind you.

4 You know, I know you wanted to hear the
5 good and the bad, but just like us as leaders,
6 you'll hear from the good stuff from time to time.
7 But, you know, you're mostly going to hear about the
8 issues. People bring us the issues because they're
9 having problems. And so that's what you're going to
10 hear.

11 And I don't want you to think it's all
12 bad, because, you know, we appreciate the things you
13 do. And thank you for hearing us out today. Thank
14 you.

15 KYLE VINT: Thank you, Chairman.

16 So our last commenter, Chairwoman Randi
17 Lone Eagle. And then we have one virtual.

18 RANDI EAGLE: You guys hear me?

19 KYLE VINT: Yeah.

20 RANDI EAGLE: Okay. (Native language
21 spoken.) Good afternoon. My name's Randi Lone
22 Eagle. I'm the tribal chairman for the Summit Lake
23 Paiute Tribe. I am also the VP Western Region
24 Representative for NCAI. Also the secretary for
25 Intertribal Council of Nevada. I would just -- I'm

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 182</p> <p>1 going to submit my comments in writing.</p> <p>2 I was really unprepared to attend today on</p> <p>3 what was going to be discussed. I did hear from</p> <p>4 another tribal member like two weeks ago that this</p> <p>5 meeting was actually taking place. So, you know, we</p> <p>6 talk about tribal consultation, meaningful tribal</p> <p>7 consultation. You know, don't just push paper,</p> <p>8 don't just send us emails, you know, last minute or</p> <p>9 no emails at all, or letters, you know, our dear</p> <p>10 tribal letters that we receive.</p> <p>11 You know, a lot of the things that we're</p> <p>12 talking about today are very important from law</p> <p>13 enforcement. You know, our homelands putting land</p> <p>14 into trust. You know, we talk about fee lands,</p> <p>15 healthcare, MMIW, all of the things that you guys</p> <p>16 are asking. It's like we want to see results as</p> <p>17 well. You're asking us what to do. You should</p> <p>18 actually have results for us.</p> <p>19 And what's -- and I know it doesn't happen</p> <p>20 overnight. That's something that we deal with on</p> <p>21 the other end. You know, we get the good and bad in</p> <p>22 answering to our membership, to our tribal members</p> <p>23 and citizens. What are we doing? How are we being</p> <p>24 held accountable? We're going to hold you guys</p> <p>25 accountable as well.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 184</p> <p>1 closing? and I know you guys said earlier you guys</p> <p>2 aren't closing, you know, certain locations, but</p> <p>3 what happens with the tribes that rely on specific</p> <p>4 regions that is -- really underfunded within that</p> <p>5 western region office. Probate from law enforcement</p> <p>6 have the chief of police that we deal with.</p> <p>7 He deals with my tribe and three other</p> <p>8 tribes combined, to deal with any of the issues that</p> <p>9 we have on our reservations, being in the rural</p> <p>10 areas of Nevada or in the upper corner of Nevada</p> <p>11 itself. You know, we have an admin office in</p> <p>12 Sparks, Nevada, but our reservation is four hours</p> <p>13 the other direction.</p> <p>14 So there's no real way to, you know, make</p> <p>15 sure that we're doing what we should as the federal</p> <p>16 government and/or our tribal leaders to make sure</p> <p>17 that we're giving a safe environment to our tribal</p> <p>18 communities, the resources that we do have. You</p> <p>19 know, so there's a lack of accountability, lack of</p> <p>20 funding, infrastructure. You talk about economic</p> <p>21 development, same thing.</p> <p>22 You have to have the funding or there's a</p> <p>23 match, or it's competitive with, you know, other</p> <p>24 tribes. You know, think about the other tribes that</p> <p>25 don't have those resources or cap tribe, you know, I</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 183</p> <p>1 As, you know, you have a job to do, we</p> <p>2 have a job to do as tribal leaders and citizens of</p> <p>3 our tribes that, you know, all of these things go</p> <p>4 hand in hand. You know, in the very beginning when</p> <p>5 all of this switched over and the administration, I</p> <p>6 -- thankfully my tribe, you know, wasn't, you know,</p> <p>7 locked out of, you know, the federal agencies that</p> <p>8 we deal with as far as funding.</p> <p>9 That wasn't an issue for us, thankfully.</p> <p>10 But it's like daily we're checking to see are we</p> <p>11 locked out? Are we not? Do we have access? You</p> <p>12 know, do we have all the resources that we need? We</p> <p>13 solely rely on the BIA with what funds we do</p> <p>14 receive. We know you guys are staff underfunded, we</p> <p>15 -- minimal funding, you know, and that's across the</p> <p>16 board. We've talked about probate.</p> <p>17 We've talked about a lot of the different</p> <p>18 things today, you know, with everything that has</p> <p>19 been discussed already this far. But with probate,</p> <p>20 I've had a few tribal members reach out to me</p> <p>21 recently. You know, they've had cases since 2016,</p> <p>22 2017 that are still waiting because there's only one</p> <p>23 person in the Western agency office that we deal</p> <p>24 with.</p> <p>25 And so it's, are we shifting if we're</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 185</p> <p>1 know you mentioned earlier, "I'm a pre-cap tribe,</p> <p>2 you know."</p> <p>3 Same thing, you know, a lot of the times,</p> <p>4 you know, that's the thing, you know, federal</p> <p>5 governments and/or those outside of the tribal</p> <p>6 communities think that all the tribes are the same.</p> <p>7 We're not. You know, we're -- come see us, come</p> <p>8 visit us, come to our reservations under dense</p> <p>9 colonies to see how we live in, you know, on a day-</p> <p>10 to-day basis.</p> <p>11 You know, we walk two worlds as native</p> <p>12 people and I don't want to get emotional, so I'm</p> <p>13 going to keep it short, but I will send my stuff in</p> <p>14 writing. (Native language spoken). Thank you for</p> <p>15 your time.</p> <p>16 BRYAN MERCIER: Thank you.</p> <p>17 KYLE VINT: Thank you, Chairwoman.</p> <p>18 So we have sounds like two people</p> <p>19 virtually.</p> <p>20 BEN DUNCAN: Yeah. We'll turn back to our</p> <p>21 virtual participants. Same as always. I'm going to</p> <p>22 ask you to unmute and then you are able to appear on</p> <p>23 camera should you want to, and you can be seen in</p> <p>24 the room. We'll go first to William Ray Jr. And</p> <p>25 then we're going to go back to Joel Jackson.</p>

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1 So first to you, William. You should have
2 the ability to unmute now. Go ahead.
3 WILLIAM RAY. JR: Thank you for this
4 opportunity to speak and be heard in this committee.
5 Before I begin some of my remarks, I'd like to take
6 a -- just a moment of silence for the return of our
7 Modoc War leaders that were hung on October 8th,
8 1873, trying to save their land and their culture
9 that haven't been returned to the Klamath tribes.
10 Thank you.
11 Thank you for the opportunity to provide
12 some sobering facts when it's comes to the
13 predicaments facing many first nations, the Klamath
14 tribes are the Klamath, Modocs, and Yahooskin-
15 Paiutes of Chiloquin, Oregon, a treaty tribe of
16 1864. The largest landowning tribe who lost its
17 reserved lands by treaty from an act of Congress in
18 1954 called the Climate Termination Act.
19 This caused PTSD, trauma, and harm to over
20 5,800 tribal citizens. This harmful act also caused
21 an environmental catastrophe by affecting our water
22 quality from overlogging, clear cutting, logging in
23 the winter range, adverse effects to our religious,
24 spiritual, and traditional cultural sites, while
25 land fire, climate, all these have -- have severely

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1 pecked away and continues to peck away at the
2 viability of the Klamath, Modoc, and Paiute
3 cultures.
4 With the swift and unplanned unconsulted
5 budget cuts reminds the Klamath tribes of the second
6 coming of termination. By the massive federal cuts
7 is a case -- is -- makes a case of alarm, since it
8 clearly shows a path to obligating the Treaty of
9 1864 and to trust responsibility. Several actions.
10 Water. By eliminating over 50 to 80
11 percent of the federal workforce has affected the
12 USGS, NOAA, Fish Wildlife Service, Natural Resource
13 Conservation Service, Forest Service, FEMA, and
14 other vital agencies who are responsible for the
15 monitoring and research of water quality, phosphorus
16 loading and the effects of the endangered species,
17 listed species of our C'waam and Koptu in the upper
18 Klamath Lake and all treaty protected resources.
19 Now we are left without the federal
20 government as the trustee to perform these important
21 treaty protective resource trust responsibilities.
22 Second, food, water, and shelter. The three
23 essentials to life. All programs in the USDA, HUD,
24 and regulatory agencies have become either non-
25 existent or ineffective to deliver the trust

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1 responsibility. Three, NEPA and NHPA.
2 Eliminating these important laws backed up
3 by case law by bypassing these is unacceptable and
4 gives the appearance that there are no laws to
5 safeguard sound, ethical, and tribally protected
6 resources into the future. Four, slashing budgets
7 without any reason. Budgets has and will continue
8 to damage what has either been planned, started, or
9 under contract for restoration on the Klamath River.
10 Funds already appropriated are being cut.
11 These funds are critically important for
12 the water quality, ESA species of mullet, anadromous
13 salmon, and overall watershed health in the Klamath
14 River. We will urge that the inadequate
15 consultation of NEPA, NHPA, and other related laws
16 for all projects be rejected and returned to the
17 timeline set out when Congress passed these laws and
18 restore the federal workforce, the trustee.
19 In many of these agencies I just mentioned
20 in the BIA, HUD, Health and Human Services, NRCS,
21 Forest Service, FEMA, USGS. We will urge to restore
22 the funding from the 2023, 2024 Congressional
23 appropriations for the Klamath River Watershed, the
24 other upper Klamath Lake Upland Watershed
25 restoration as a whole for water quality monitoring

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1 and research.
2 I want to thank you for this opportunity
3 to speak, and that I hope that there will be a
4 little bit more reasonableness when these cuts are
5 -- are very unilateral and has some damaging effects
6 on our mullet species that are about ready to go
7 extinct. I -- I thank for the opportunity. William
8 Ray Jr., the tribal chairman of the Klamath Tribes.
9 KYLE VINT: Thank you, William.
10 And we're going to go to Joel Jackson
11 next.
12 Joel, you should be able to unmute
13 yourself.
14 JOEL JACKSON: Yes. Thank you for
15 allowing me to speak again. I didn't mention some
16 things in my closing comments, which was we do have
17 trust lands in my tribe. We got 14.2 acres that the
18 tribe has a trust. And we're currently working on
19 trying to get the funding for a few things that we
20 want to -- we -- we -- we want to build on there.
21 One of them being a tribal house.
22 And the other thing that's linked to it
23 back in 1865, I believe, or '69, our little village
24 was bombarded by the -- the US Army or Navy. And it
25 happened in January, right up middle of the winter.

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1 And we lost people. And we finally got the
2 Department of Defense to come and do their apology
3 to us. And there was two other tribes. One was
4 Angoon and Wrangell. They apologized to them.
5 It was really important because it was
6 open wound and it still is. We told them, you know,
7 if you want to do an apology, you're going to have
8 to put on a potlatch. That's the way of our culture
9 is the person that had -- did the wrong has to do a
10 -- do a dinner before they do their apology. And
11 they did that, but they also requested we had --
12 that they -- we provide them with our -- our native
13 dance group.
14 I told them, "Well, it's -- they're not
15 going to dance. They'll sing three songs and
16 they'll all be mourning songs." Why I am saying
17 that is, in order to get -- move -- move forward
18 again, is that they're going to have to come up with
19 compensation to our tribe. And we're -- and, you
20 know, we're still waiting.
21 We gave them a list of what we wanted,
22 which is not unreasonable because they destroyed
23 everything on that day, houses, food caches, canoes.
24 And unfortunately, they didn't kill anybody directly
25 that they -- our people had to go into the woods and

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1 hide away. And being in the middle of winter, we
2 lost the younger ones and the older elders in our --
3 our community.
4 There is no record of how many were lost.
5 And this all stemmed from a incident over in Sitka,
6 Alaska. The -- the Navy sentry over there, they --
7 they locked down the port. I'm just trying to be
8 real quick. They locked down the port. And after
9 they -- they said everybody can come and go as they
10 please again. They didn't notify the sentry on one
11 of the ships that were out there.
12 So three of our -- our people were
13 leaving, and one of those sentry's shot two of our
14 people and killed them. So they immediate -- the --
15 the canoe turned around and went and asked for
16 compensation because what's -- what -- that's what
17 happens when you kill somebody. You got to
18 compensate for them. You got to pay up. But the
19 commander of the fort over there said, "No way."
20 So our people returned to Kake with their
21 loved ones. And a little while later, they were out
22 hunting and they came across two minors, or, you
23 know, they -- they pulled up there and they killed
24 both of them. They let one -- one native guy go to
25 tell the story. And that's where that bombardment

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1 happened right after that. They didn't come and try
2 to contact our people.
3 They just came in and start bombarding our
4 settlements all over around us and our village here.
5 So just so you know, if you want to look it up, look
6 up the Kake Wars. That's what it's listed as. And
7 that wasn't a war, that was a slaughter, or the --
8 just no call for it.
9 And, you know, so -- and the other one,
10 the last one, and this has played on my mind ever
11 since I was -- I was a young man, is the blood
12 quantum that we are -- was put on us. A quarter --
13 you have to be a quarter native to qualify to be in
14 our tribes. The only other creatures on this earth
15 that I know has that blood quantum is dogs and
16 horses. So that kind of tells you where they put
17 us.
18 And that has upset me forever. You know,
19 it just -- it's just unbelievable on how our people
20 have been treated over the years since contact. I
21 remember my father telling me that there was signs
22 in Juneau, the capital of Alaska, that there was no
23 dogs or Indians allowed in their restaurants, in any
24 of their business. So that has really upset me.
25 So, you know, I just wanted to mention

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1 that to you so you know, kind of a little history of
2 what our people have went through. Like I said, I
3 thank you for allowing me to speak again, because I
4 think I had to put that down as you know, part of my
5 testimony to you, my comments to you, really. So I
6 -- again, I appreciate this opportunity to comment.
7 BEN DUNCAN: Great. Thank you. So
8 believe that concludes our leader consultation
9 session. We got about 25 minutes left, and I do
10 want to open it up for any non-leaders that would
11 like to offer some input, but before I do, just
12 wanted to pass it to the table to offer any
13 reflections or -- or gratitude for what you heard
14 today.
15 BRYAN MERCIER: Yeah. Thank you all for
16 -- for coming and offering comment. And -- and
17 those of you that stick with us, I really appreciate
18 you sticking through it. We're almost -- let me see
19 the hour here -- five hours in with about a 20-
20 minute break. So that's pretty good. Not quite the
21 record we had in Alaska, but that's a good -- a good
22 length.
23 You know, some of the things that I
24 reflect on hearing today that at least affect me is
25 the -- the fact that you all feel like this has been

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1 done before. Like we've been here and we say the
2 same things of consultations and consultations.
3 And, you know, being from a tribal community myself
4 raised in rural western Oregon town, you know, I --
5 I don't disagree with that.
6 But that's the weight of this job for us
7 as tribal citizens that work for the federal
8 government. With a 201-year history, that's often
9 failed. In the last 50 years we've been making
10 progress through self-determination, self-
11 governance.
12 And so what we try to do in our short
13 tenures in federal careers is to continue to move
14 that ball forward so that we are building capacity
15 and the -- and the strengths in your communities to
16 diminish to these programs without the federal
17 paternalism and bureaucracy that -- that limits your
18 abilities.
19 So as -- as Kelly said when Chairman Lee
20 was speaking, we will be taking this back and doing
21 our best to reflect and advise the decisionmakers
22 here of what we've heard. And so the emotion, the
23 -- the -- the -- I mean, I've got like six pages of
24 notes of really great things to say and to use.
25 You're equipping us with the tools for us to be

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1 effective at our jobs.
2 So it's not just for show. You all are
3 helping us do our jobs. So I want to thank -- thank
4 you for that because there's some great talking
5 points that I'm gleaning from this and great
6 substance that will make use. And hope to me -- I
7 hope it -- it's -- it's effective. And -- and I'm
8 optimistic that we'll see -- continue to see
9 progress like we have over the last 50 years since
10 the -- in the self-determination Act.
11 So I just want to say thank you from --
12 for speaking and coming. You all have the toughest
13 jobs in America, being tribal leaders. My younger
14 brother is a 21-year vice chairman of my tribe.
15 He's been on council for 21 years. He's a year
16 younger than me. So he started in his mid-20s and
17 he's still going. And it's -- I see it on him. He
18 looks older than me. It's a tough job.
19 You can't go to the store without somebody
20 catching you and telling you, "I need help with
21 something." It's a 24/7 gig. We -- at least I can
22 go home and see my kids and I can check out. You
23 all don't get that luxury. So fully understand. So
24 thank you. And just -- so I just wanted to share, I
25 really appreciate what I heard today from the

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1 leaders, and thank you all for -- for taking the
2 time. So thank you.
3 SHARON PINTO: I've -- it's just the irony
4 of me being on the other side, pointing my finger at
5 the federal government for quite a while, and now
6 being on this side of the table. I hear your
7 concerns and I know that they're all very, very,
8 very valid, your frustrations and your emotions, and
9 I just want to thank you for your raw -- your
10 rawness today.
11 It -- it should not always feel
12 comfortable -- it doesn't always feel comfortable
13 being up here. But it's necessary for us to hear
14 because that's what drives my passion into being in
15 this role. I -- I think God has a sense of humor,
16 which is why I'm here. But I -- I appreciate
17 everything and like I said earlier, that we will
18 communicate this to our decisionmakers because I --
19 you're right, this is the definition of insanity.
20 And I -- I -- I hope that we can break
21 this insanity and that we can do right for once,
22 even if it's just turning the Titanic a little bit
23 to the right to avoid the iceberg, even if we could
24 just make that little pivot to make it better. As
25 long as we could be better than we were yesterday

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1 and continue that we will make progress. And so I
2 just wanted to thank you.
3 And, you know, I want to invite all of you
4 to -- to invite us to your regions. It doesn't mean
5 we can do it all the time, but please invite us,
6 include us when you're in DC and you're meeting with
7 lawmakers and -- and agencies, come see us. We
8 would love to learn more about your areas, your --
9 your tribes and -- and your people and what -- what
10 issues are and more one-on-one levels. So we
11 welcome that and we hope to hear more from you.
12 KYLE VINT: Yeah. Back to you, Ben. Do
13 you have any other comments from --
14 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you. Did we get any
15 hands?
16 KYLE VINT: I don't have any hands online,
17 but I -- I think I'd just reiterate, if you are
18 online, you can click the participate button and
19 then raise hands. Sometimes it's hidden under the
20 more tab. You can also chat me if you're having any
21 difficulties finding the raise hand, and I can help
22 get you unmuted and into the comment queue.
23 BEN DUNCAN: Great. Thanks, Kyle. So
24 we'll give that a second. I -- we had -- a couple
25 people signed up that have crossed their names out

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1 the list, but I'll give a scan of the room, if
2 anyone's interested. Okay. I'm not seeing any
3 hands pop up. Is that an ask for the group if
4 somebody would like to offer?
5 SHARON PINTO: Yeah. Would somebody like
6 to offer a closing prayer?
7 JOHN ELLIOT: (Native language spoken).
8 Wanted to take a minute and ask the
9 creator to be here with us to reach out his hand and
10 guide us in a good way. Watch over the people that
11 we look up to, our elders, the older people who have
12 passed on, but who have taught us what we know
13 today. Creator, watch out for the youth and the
14 children, the babies. They're the future. They're
15 the ones that are going to be doing this after we're
16 gone, after educate them to remember where we come
17 from.
18 I just wanted to say real quick, I have
19 two comments. The disparities for our people are
20 great. Sometimes unimaginably great. Don't know if
21 we're going to be able to pin you on sometimes
22 because it feels like everything is against us.
23 Couple examples, FIDA trust. We heard many leaders
24 talk about FIDA trust today.
25 The process takes years and years. But

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1 like I said, the disparities are great because
2 individuals, families, corporations, nonprofits take
3 land out of trust -- out of the tax rolls all the
4 time. Thousands of acres every year. But where's
5 the AG saying no, they can't have it? Because the
6 AG does that to us.
7 The counties, the cities, the states,
8 individual families, businesses come out against us
9 yet individuals, families, nonprofits, and
10 corporations take land out of the tax rolls every
11 day, why? Why aren't they put to the same process
12 that we have to go through? Oh, because they're not
13 Indians. I know.
14 Many people said it today, we'll have to
15 keep coming. We come, we come. We have to do this
16 because we're protecting our people. Something I
17 didn't hear today, all these letters were sent out,
18 dear tribal leaders. But where was the information
19 to go with that? You asked us a lot of questions
20 and expected us to respond. But where's the study?
21 Where's the analysis of your processes and
22 your workflows to identify -- to identify where
23 efficiencies can happen? Why does it take so long?
24 Why does an ROW take two years, three years?
25 There's some inefficiencies there. You know, self-

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1 governance was a great thing when it came around.
2 Our tribe signed up long years ago.
3 We've been self-governance since 1998, and
4 we had to go through a process. They vetted us.
5 They looked at our -- our audits, they looked at all
6 these things. Then we got approved. Today though,
7 when you get a grant put through self-governance,
8 that's not on our -- on our list of compacted
9 functions. Why does it take so long for that grant
10 to get in there?
11 What are those inefficiencies? Why do so
12 many people in so many departments have to sign off?
13 And then when that happens, we get a community
14 resilience grant that, "Oh, well, we're getting to
15 it. We'll get -- we'll get it to you. It'll be in
16 your self-governance." Oh, but before that
17 happened, we were sent a 30 plus page document and
18 an amendment where we had to agree to all these
19 things that isn't in self-governance.
20 Where's the spirit of self-governance
21 coming through to all these extra grants that are
22 coming through? Where's the efficiency in that?
23 Extra reporting, extra having to deal with the
24 bureau on environmental and all these other things.
25 When it was pointed out by one of the chairs before

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1 me. And I'm not the chair, I'm just a councilman.
2 In other areas, tribes are kicking butt.
3 Sometimes when it comes to these processes in the
4 bureau, it gets lost and our people are harmed. But
5 where's that study? Where did DOGE -- did DOGE come
6 in here and do a study and say, "Wait, this workflow
7 looks like it takes too many people, too much time,
8 but let's cut that down."
9 No, they just came in and said, "Cut half
10 your people. Cut this, cut that, cut the budget."
11 No information. No real study. No real
12 documentation. And you guys are here asking us
13 questions about what you guys do. Where's the real
14 partnership? Where's the real transparency that we
15 can do the job that we need to do as tribal leaders,
16 and that's take care of our people, not be at a desk
17 till 9 or 10 o'clock at night worrying about getting
18 a report in?
19 Or how do -- what words do we even use in
20 our reports? The government sent out a letter that
21 said, "You can't use any of these words in your
22 reports or your -- or your funding's going to be
23 taken -- taken away." Unimaginable. What are we?
24 Five? No. We've proven time and time again that we
25 can run our tribal governments and we can take of

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1 our -- take care of our people if we have the
2 resources. Thank you.
3 BEN DUNCAN: Thanks Councilman.
4 Councilman, can I get you to state your name for the
5 record?
6 JOHN ELLIOT: Oh, I -- I'm sorry. My name
7 is John Eagle-Spirit Elliot. I'm on the Tribal
8 Council of the Manzanita Band of the Kumeyaay
9 Nation. And thank you for allowing me to speak.
10 BEN DUNCAN: Confirming we have no hands
11 up. We're going to adjourn the meeting. I'll just
12 express again, some appreciation and gratitude for
13 -- for everyone who came and gave so much of their
14 expertise and wisdom.
15 So we'll close it out. Have a wonderful
16 day. Much love. Appreciate everybody.
17 (WHEREUPON, the TRIBAL CONSULTATION
18 adjourned at 4:19 p.m.)
19
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CERTIFICATE

1
2
3 I, Errin Kent, do hereby certify that I
4 reported all proceedings adduced in the foregoing
5 matter and that the foregoing transcript pages
6 constitutes a full, true and accurate record of said
7 proceedings to the best of my ability.
8

9 I further certify that I am neither related to
10 counsel or any party to the proceedings nor have any
11 interest in the outcome of the proceedings.
12

13 IN WITNESS HEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand
14 this 30th day of May, 2025.
15

16
17 
18

19 Errin Kent, #2704
20
21
22
23
24
25

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