

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 15, 2024

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Merkley and Ranking Member Murkowski:

As you consider funding priorities in the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, we ask that you support robust funding for Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Public Safety and Justice Law Enforcement programs. We appreciate your past support for tribal law enforcement, and we hope that you will make funding for these programs a priority.

As you know, tribal communities are experiencing a major uptick in violent and drug-related crime that can only be described as a crisis. According to leadership at the Department of the Interior, recent data indicates some tribes have experienced violent crime rates five times higher than the U.S. national average. Many law enforcement leaders in Indian Country directly attribute a recent increase in crime to severe shortages of police personnel. On numerous reservations, only a handful of officers are tasked with patrolling millions of acres. Criminal entities, including Mexican drug cartels, are taking note of the lack of manpower and are directly targeting reservation communities. As a result, tribal law enforcement officers are encountering higher volumes of illegal drugs, including fentanyl.

Tribal law enforcement agencies have been under-resourced and under-staffed for decades and they are now being asked to face a new, dangerous threat posed by these cartels and criminal organizations. With low personnel numbers and a high number of calls for assistance, tribal law enforcement officers often struggle to respond to emergencies in a timely manner. In an attempt to address manpower issues, a number of tribal leaders have asked the federal government to provide emergency resources.

Again, we appreciate the Subcommittee's past support for tribal law enforcement and encourage you to make funding for these programs a priority in FY 2025. Robust funding for BIA Public Safety and Justice Law Enforcement programs will help address the public safety crisis and improve law enforcement services in reservation communities.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.


Sincerely,




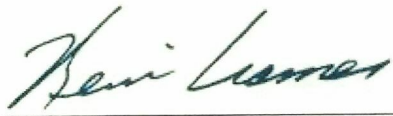
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