

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 25, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

As you work to finalize your Fiscal Year 2022 budget request, we urge you to include critical funding to address the chronic federal shortfalls identified by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (Commission) in its 2018 report, *Broken Promises: Continuing Federal Funding Shortfall for Native Americans* (“Broken Promises Report”).

The Broken Promises Report is an update to the Commission’s 2003 report, *A Quiet Crisis: Federal Funding and Unmet Needs in Indian Country*. Both reports “evaluat[e] budgets and spending of federal agencies that sponsor Native American programs, including the Departments of Health and Human Services, Interior, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, and Education.”

Unfortunately, the Broken Promises Report determined that, “[d]espite some progress, the crisis the Commission found in 2003 remains, and the federal government continues to fail to support adequately the social and economic wellbeing of Native Americans.” The Report further concluded that “[d]ue at least in part to the failure of the federal government to adequately address the wellbeing of Native Americans over the last two centuries, Native Americans continue to rank near the bottom of all Americans in health, education, and employment outcomes.”

There are simply too many sobering conclusions made in Broken Promises Report to address them all in this letter, but we wanted to highlight some of the most alarming:

- The average life expectancy for Native Americans is 5.5 years less than the national average.
- Native American women are ten times more likely to be murdered and four times more likely to be sexually assaulted than the national average.
- The rate of suicide in Indian Country is 60 percent higher than the national average, and 150 percent higher for Native male youth.
- More than half a million Native American households are living in conditions that are overcrowded, substandard, or cost prohibitive.
- Native Americans experience higher rates of unemployment than any other racial group and the rate of poverty in Indian Country is twice the national average.
- Educational outcomes for Native Americans fall significantly short of the national average across every metric, from graduating high school to completing a two- or four-year post-secondary program.

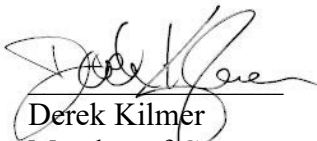
As you know, the trust responsibility the United States owes to Tribes is a legally cognizable embodiment of treaties and other agreements between sovereign nations. For example, many Tribes are recognized as the Country's earliest and longest continuous treaty ratified allies. Additionally, as the Report articulates, "[i]n exchange for the surrender and reduction of tribal lands and removal and resettlement of approximately one-fifth of Native American tribes from their original lands, the United States signed 375 treaties, passed laws, and instituted policies that shape and define the special government-to-government relationship between federal and tribal governments."

The Broken Promises Report highlights the Federal Government's pervasive, continuous, and unconscionable failure to meet the trust responsibility it owes to Native American peoples and Tribes and demands a comprehensive and wholistic response. We are encouraged that you have already affirmed your commitment to "[fulfil] Federal trust and treaty responsibilities to Tribal Nations" through the Memorandum on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships. We share your dedication and commitment to ensuring that the federal government acts on the recommendations outlined by the Commission in the Broken Promises Report so that we can finally fulfill our treaty and trust obligations to Native American communities.

While we recognize that Congress is ultimately responsible for appropriating the necessary resources, your budget request will serve as an important foundation for those efforts and reaffirm your commitment to a whole-of-government approach to meeting our treaty and trust obligations. Therefore, we respectfully request that your FY 2022 budget request including the necessary funding increases to begin addressing the disparities outlined in the Broken Promises Report.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. We look forward to working with you and your Administration to achieve our shared goals.

Sincerely,


Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress


Mike Simpson
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
David P. Joyce
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Tom Cole
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Greg Stanton
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Adam Smith
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Sharice L. Davids
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Rick Larsen
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Don Young
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Daniel T. Kildee
Member of Congress

Cc:
Deb Haaland, Secretary, U.S. Department of Interior
PaaWee Rivera, Senior Advisor for Intergovernmental Affairs and Director of Tribal Affairs,
The White House
Bryan Newland, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of
Interior
Rob Fairweather, Acting Director, Office of Management and Budget