



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

May 9, 2018

The Honorable John Culberson, Chairman
Commerce, Justice, Science
Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jose Serrano, Ranking Member
Commerce, Justice, Science
Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

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Dear Chairman Culberson and Ranking Member Serrano:

On behalf of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the nation's oldest and largest organization representing American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments, I am writing to express our concerns about the tribal justice funding that is included in the Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations bill that the subcommittee will be marking up today. **Overall funding for tribal programs at DOJ will be cut by more than 55% if the bill is enacted as currently drafted.**

The Crime Victims Fund (CVF)

Native Americans are victims of crime at staggering rates. According to the National Institute of Justice, more than four in five American Indian and Alaska Native women have experienced some form of violence in their lifetime. More than half (56.1 percent) have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime. Native children are 50% more likely to experience child abuse and sexual abuse than white children. Native victims are *more* likely to be injured as a result of their violent victimization, *more* likely to need services, and are significantly *less* likely to have access to services compared to their non-Native counterparts. *National Institute of Justice Research Report: Violence Against Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men (May 2016).*

The CVF is the federal government's primary funding source for providing services to victims of crime. NCAI expresses our sincere gratitude to appropriators for providing a direct funding stream for tribal governments from the CVF for the first time in FY 18. This funding will allow tribal governments to begin building the services and programs that victims need to heal and access justice. For this funding to achieve its purpose, however, it needs to be annual funding that tribal governments can count on to ensure program stability for victims for the long term. We urge appropriators to keep disbursements from the CVF at the increased level and to direct 5% of overall CFV disbursements to tribal governments.

Create a streamlined tribal allocation across the Office of Justice Programs (OJP).

The proposed funding levels for FY 19 would result in a \$10 million cut for tribal programs at OJP. These cuts will further compound the public safety and justice funding crisis that has plagued tribal communities for decades. For several years the Administration has proposed streamlining and consolidating OJP tribal programs by allocating 7 percent from all discretionary OJP programs to address Indian country public safety and tribal criminal justice needs. A streamlined OJP tribal allocation would significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the federal funding process by which tribes receive resources to establish tribal courts; assist in developing detention facilities; provide legal assistance; develop and maintain juvenile delinquency prevention programs; and provide substance abuse prevention programs. We urge you to adopt the Administration's approach to tribal funding at OJP.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations. We would also like to thank you for increasing funding for tribal law enforcement to \$35 million. These funds are very much needed. Please do not hesitate to contact me or NCAI Senior Policy Advisor Virginia Davis, vdavis@ncai.org, if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Jefferson Keel, President