

House Appropriations Subcommittee

March 18, 2026

American Indian and Alaska Native Public Witness (Day 2, Afternoon Session)

Opening Statements:

Rep. Mike Simpson, Chairman (R-ID)

- Welcome to the fourth and final session of our public witness hearings for the American Indian and Alaska Native programs.

Rep. Betty McCollum, Ranking Member alternate (D-MN)

- All written testimonies are in our hands, and we read them and it's important to hear your concerns.
- Note: Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-ME) arrived late.

Highlights:

- The importance of consistent funding and advanced appropriations were raised in concert with previous witnesses; that insufficient funding in programs relating to law enforcement, healthcare, education, and natural resources lead to an ongoing cycle of detrimental results for Tribal nations.
- Several witnesses also highlighted the need to release funding that has been frozen by OMB.

Witness Statements:

Cynthia Petersen, President (Yakutat Tlingit Tribe)

- Tribal Budget is so small that any cuts will not result in Federal Savings, but it will devastate our citizens, we urge Congress to permanently exempt the IHS and BIA from cuts, sequestrations, rescissions and funding freezes.
- We ask that you appropriate enough funds to support both existing and new tribal Coast stewardship agreements.
- We continue to advocate for advanced appropriations and support your proposal to expand it to healthcare and sanitation facilities, construction mandatory funding.

Jarred-Michael Erickson, Chairman (Confederate Tribes of Colville Reservation)

- The Colville tribe is a confederation of 12 aboriginal tribes and bands from across eastern Washington State, Northeastern Oregon and Idaho and British Columbia.
- It's an Executive Order Tribe that covers 1.4 million acres and is the largest Indian Reservation in the Pacific Northwest.

- There's a constant need for additional funding for tribal law enforcement detention operations.

Jeremy Takala, Tribal Councilman (Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation)

- We cover about 10 million acres that we have access to, or more so a third of Washington State with the current 1.4 million acre reservation.
- Unfair to cut funding for Indian programs, not to mention a violation of federal government's treaty commitments and trust obligations.
- The Yakama Nation is the best manager of our forest, so we will 638 contract the entirety of the forestry program on our lands.
- Ask that this subcommittee provides direction to the BIA to ensure sufficient funding for all vacant positions that BIA has allowed to lapse.
- We have always relied on salmon so the low rates of returning salmon is an urgent issue.

Kristopher Peters, Chairman (Squaxin Island Tribe)

- Our Tribe has long been underserved in terms of health, health clinics, and healthcare. So, we want to build a regional health complex that provides quality healthcare, urgent care, and pharmacy. We are asking for \$6 million.
- Asking for another \$1.29 million to extend that same septic and water line and power and fire hydrants for a housing development that we're going to be putting in over the next few years.
- We are also asking for about 900,000 to help with shellfish restoration.

Loni Greninger, Vice-Chairwoman (Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe)

- Requesting \$800,000 annually to sustain that successful co-management agreement, and to boost that partnership that we have with you, to be able to keep that sacred duty going.
- Relocate our natural resources lab and office more inland right now it is sitting right on our shores, and that is designated by FEMA as a 100-year flood plain as a tsunami zone.
- Asking for immediate release of the \$3.9 million award from BIA that's been stalled through OMB.

Quintin Swanson, Chairman (Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe)

- Our entire reservation sits in a tsunami zone. A single event would wipe out our homes, our government, our economy, the show water, way of life.
- Our long-term solution is clear. We must relocate our community to higher ground.
- We've purchased almost 4000 acres of upland property and began the early stages of development.
- Siloed federal programs means we've received funds with different timelines and requirements and restrictions.
- We strongly urge this subcommittee to support and advance the TERRA Act.

- We need to highlight an urgent economic issue about our only marina. Sediment build up has made the marina dangerously shallow at low tide; vessels are stranded. This impacts shellfish operations, which hold over 3 million oysters and are valued at over a million dollars.

Robert de los Angeles, Chairman (Snoqualmie Indian Tribe)

- Include funding in the FY 2027 budget for the sacred site protection that would give the BIA the ability to assist tribes in defending and preserving their sacred sites.
- Request the subcommittee to support the establishment of a pilot program and interagency federal task force including the DOI the duty and the FAA to study airspace threats to tribal sacred sites and work collaboratively with tribal nations to implement protections for these irreplaceable places.
- Another issue: the advanced appropriations for Indian Health Services; recent Medicaid reforms to the One Big Beautiful Bill, act that will impact tribes.

Guy Capoeman, President (Quinault Indian Nation)

- The Quinault nation is a reservation located in the Olympic Peninsula, 220,000 acres of land in the Olympic Peninsula, and we have about 4676 tribal members.
- OMB froze tribal electric electrification program funding in 2025: \$7.6 million under the tribal electrification program received to help us construct the Tohola Village Energy Park.
- \$50 million in FY27 would help secure a good position with relocation projects.
- Advanced appropriation for healthcare services is vital.

William (Bill) Iyall, Chairman (Cowlitz Indian Tribe)

- We have a small reservation 16 miles north of Portland. It started out 156 acres now growing to 300 acres. We're in the process of nation building.
- Tribe needs Tribal governance center, public safety, other facilities for areas like healthcare, public safety, road infrastructure, and water infrastructure.
- We urge a subcommittee to significantly increase IHS funding levels to provide mandatory funding for contract health support and to continue providing advance appropriations, all are essential to meet the federal trust obligation to provide healthcare for Native Americans.
- More federal funding is needed to help with these basic law enforcement needs and protect our members in the community we serve.
- BIA roads have been underfunded for decades, and available funding is nowhere near what's needed to meet the plan and the construction and improvements that we need for those roads.
- More federal funding for water and wastewater infrastructure through IHS and EPA programs would help protect water resources, ensure safe and sanitary water, wastewater disposal, and facilitate our economic, economic development and growth.

Louie Ungaro, Councilman (Muckleshoot Indian Tribe)

- Need continued support for culturally rooted education programming through BIE programs that support language revitalization and cultural learning. These programs help our young people strengthen their identity and stay connected to their community.
- Continued investment in the EPA Puget Sound Program is critical for protecting ecosystems that the communities rely on.
- Approved disaster funding in the amount of \$1.2 million has been stuck at the OMB for almost two years. Anything that can be done by the subcommittee to release the funds would greatly help.

Annette Bryan, Councilwoman (Puyallup Tribe of Indians)

- The Puyallup Tribal Council is responsible for providing services to more than 6000 enrolled tribal members, and we have over 25,000 members of 350 approximately 355 federally recognized tribes who utilize our services in our very urban area.
- Tribe needs support in four areas: healthcare, public safety, natural resources, and education.
- PRC allocation remains inadequate to meet the actual needs of our members; urge the subcommittee to provide increased funding for PRC.
- Beyond the need to secure people's health and safety, the tribe has treaty responsibilities to manage its natural resources and is beneficial to the tribal membership and the regional communities.

Derek Bowman, Council Member (Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria)

- Here to speak about the critical appropriations issue affecting our tribe and many others across Indian country the urgent need for sustained, equitable funding for tribal law enforcement.
- Our tribe struggles to recruit and retain qualified officers because we cannot compete with state and local jurisdictions on salary, retirement and benefits when neighboring agencies offer significantly higher compensation and long-term stability.
- Limited law enforcement resources, jurisdictional confusion, and delayed response can allow cases to go unresolved and families without answers.
- Urge this subcommittee to expand base Interior Appropriations to support ongoing tribal law enforcement operations, not just start up programs. Create funding mechanisms that allow tribes to achieve parity and compensation and benefits with state and local agencies.

Joe Davis, Chairman (Hoopa Valley Tribe)

- With loss of resources over time, Hoopa continues to struggle with poverty, high crime rates, and drug abuse. At the same time, we support our Tribal law

enforcement program, emergency services, social services, ICWA, forestry, fire, and fisheries.

- The more we can support community programs, the healthier our people will be.
- But Hoopa has to pay a lot of money and wait for reimbursements.
- We really appreciate any support we can get.

Ed Johnstone, Chairman (Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission)

- We request \$66 million for BIA rights protection.
- We're facing so many challenges. And the life blood of the Quinault and all of our streams are the salmon, and what it means to ours, to our people.

Jon Panamaroff, Co-Chair (Native American Contractors Association)

- NACA's mission is to enhance native economic self-determination through conservation and advancement of government contracting to our communities based on the unique government to government relationship between Native Americans and the federal government.
- Native companies are fundamentally different from individually owned companies. They are not owned by a single entrepreneur or driven by a private sector shareholder returns.
- We would recommend the committee approve successful funding for staffing to the SBA to ensure agency is following congressional intent in closing, until native economic opportunities are improved dramatically.

Ervin Carlson, President (Inter Tribal Buffalo Council)

- The Indian population of our member tribes exceeds 1 million people. Despite the growth of our membership, appropriated funding has not increased to allow ITBC to pass through sufficient funds to member tribes for meaningful buffalo restoration and management efforts.
- Despite the increase in funding for FY26, the total funding remains far short to accommodate the needs of 90 Tribes.
- On behalf of the ITBC tribes, I respectfully request 17 million for Fiscal Year 2027. When we asked our member tribes what they needed from ITBC or development grants, the accumulated response came back at 17 million.

Cody Desautel, President (Intertribal Timber Council)

- Tribal forests are managed for wildlife habitat, aquatic resources and sources of food and medicine, critical to the cultural identity of Indian people.
- Management of Indian forests also generate significant revenue for tribal governments, supporting essential governmental services like education, social services and law enforcement.
- We request that the committee set aside \$20 million in the Interior Appropriations Bill to be distributed jointly by the secretaries of Agriculture and Interior on a competitive basis, based on their assessment of where timber sales can be

generated the fastest at the lowest cost of the federal government and best utilized by the forest products manufacturing sector.

- ITC requests that Congress prioritize funding for Indian forest in its 2027 appropriations bill.

[Mark Macarro](#), President (National Congress of American Indians)

- The federal government's relationship with tribal nations is rooted in trust and treaty obligations. Yet across Indian country, those obligations remain critically and chronically underfunded and too often under implemented.
- Funding must translate into real world outcomes in Tribal nations and communities.
- During the recent government shutdown, we saw how advanced appropriations for Indian Health Services ensured continuation of essential life-giving, lifesaving programs for tribal nations and their citizens, while the lack of advance appropriation for BIA programs, on the other hand, caused significant harm to tribal communities.
- We urge this committee to require the immediate release of the Fiscal Year 2022 and Fiscal Year 2023 Tribal Law and Order Act reports by BIA Office of Justice Services. The FY22 and 23 reports will show an even greater disparity between current and actual funding level needs.
- Infrastructure investments must meet basic standards of living in many tribal communities, access to safe drinking water, reliable housing, passable roads and broadband remains limited.
- Recently, we learned that BIA is planning on releasing and implementing a reorganization plan that will significantly cut staff critical to program administration.
- According to a GAO report, BIA workforce was reduced by 11% in 2025 without consultation with Tribal nations.
- View these requests not as discretionary spending, but as a fulfillment of legal and moral obligations with adequate funding, sufficient flexibility in the workforce to implement programs effectively, tribal nations can continue to drive meaningful progress for their communities.

[Ira Matt](#), Executive Director (National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers)

- We are the only nationwide nonprofit dedicated specifically to supporting tribal preservation programs and the tribal nations they serve.
- Tribes are expected to secure professional expertise comparable to what the federal government itself recognizes as specialized yet, tribes are expected to do that with funding that until recently, average close to \$100,000 a year for their entire program.
- Underfunding leads to predictable results in difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified personnel.

[Amy Minnear](#), Tribal Treasurer (Native American Finance Officers Association)

- Federal programs should be designed with coordination with the tribes from the start, not at the end.

- Strongly encourage to collect tribal data that is so desperately needed to plan for the future.
- Federal funding cycles impose real costs on tribal governments. When programs that carry legal obligations are funded through discretionary appropriations, tribes cannot reliably plan services that their citizens depend on.
- NAFOA encourages Congress to protect and expand availability in lending authority through the Department of Interior Indian loan guarantee program, as the ILGP is a critical tool for tribal capital assets, but as currently authorized, tribes cannot combine the ILGP financing with a new market tax credit.