

House Appropriations Subcommittee

March 18, 2026

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

Opening Statements:

Rep. Mike Simpson, Chairman (R-ID)

- Indian Country is a bipartisan priority for this subcommittee that continues to work to expand efforts to strengthen our federal commitment to honor our treaty and trust responsibilities with American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Rep. Chellie Pingree, Ranking Member (D-ME)

- This is a really important hearing, and we value your thoughts and information as we put together the FY 2027 bill.

Highlights:

- Like the previous sessions in this Subcommittee, witnesses raised ongoing concerns about underfunding in BIA, BIE, and IHS. Rep. Simpson reiterated Rep. Tom Cole's message about advanced appropriations continuing as the Congress works to make health program mandatory funding.

Witness Statements:

Jonas G. Hill, Councilman (Oneida Nation)

- Oneida Nation is Title IV and Title V self-governance Tribe with more than 17,000 members and an annual economic impact of \$1 billion in Wisconsin.
- We ask that Congress make it clear that all federal programs that serve tribes should be exempt from funding, funding pauses and staffing reductions.
- Oneida control over its law enforcement and healthcare programs has been transformational and enabled focus on prevention efforts and capacity building.
- But funding amounts are at 1994 levels and covers less than 1 to 8% of each BIA program we operate.
- Congress should carefully review the tribal interior budget recommendations and identify resources to meet the needs of Indian Country.
- Current unpredictable funding levels are challenging for Tribal governments to manage their own budgets and plan for the future.

Michael Conners, Chief (Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe)

- Located on the Akwesasne Mohawk Territory in New York, the Tribe has over 16,580 enrolled tribal members with about half living on the reservation.
- Direct DOI, including BIA, BIE, and IHS to uphold its treaty and trust responsibilities to federally funded, recognized Tribal governments.

- Increase funding for BIA public safety programs; additional funds for Tribal courts, law enforcement, criminal investigations and the correction system are needed.
- Fully fund BIA and BIE at \$27.1 billion. Indian Country cannot afford more cuts.
- Fully fund IHS at \$63 billion and continue advanced appropriations to protect tribal healthcare services during government shutdowns.
- Fund tribal EPA programs and fully fund the removal of the General Motors dump in Massena, New York, which is adjacent to our community.

Rep. Mike Simpson (R-ID)

- As Chairman Cole said, advanced appropriations will continue. They will continue as we try to work toward making that health program mandatory funding.
- Still concerned about the need for more funding for law enforcement which was something done in last year's bill. Law enforcement on reservations is critical.

[Eugene DeCora, Sr.](#), Councilman (Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska)

- Two essential funding investments: Public Safety and Justice and Education.
- We have long standing law enforcement shortages and overall insufficient level police services on our reservation.
- Winnebago Tribe assumed full operations of the Tribal law enforcement department. But there have been significant challenges with transition such as vehicle transfers as well as equipment and case records.
- Winnebago tribe respectfully urges the subcommittee to increase funding for BIA Public Safety and Justice, increase funding for tribal colleges and universities.

[Joseph Rupnick](#), Chairman (Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation)

- The funding mechanism right now has two sever flaws: there's no making headway when funding is based on an already underfunded budget from the previous year. And part of that does not account for any inflation or other extended costs that it takes to fund rural healthcare facilities.
- Understand living within a budget, but if the budget doesn't consider a 2-4% inflation increase, we're already starting out at a deficit.

[Mike Natchees](#), Vice Chairman (Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation)

- We ask the subcommittee to act on two issues: urgent need for the subcommittee to support energy development and secure more funding for Tribal law enforcement.
- The Uintah Indian tribe has the largest oil and gas sector in the state of Utah. Our oil and gas production supports thousands of jobs, approximately over 8000 jobs, and over \$1.5 billion in value. So, we need support to ensure our Tribe's oil and gas operations can continue to supply energy to the state of Utah and also the country.
- Our reservation is the second largest in the US, with approximately four and a half million acres, yet we only have three BIA funded law enforcement officers to serve the entire reservation.

- Our tribe supplements over 40% of our law enforcement programs, but that's still not enough to fix this problem, meaning our police officers are forced to work alone.

Laurel Ann Yellowhorse, Chairwoman (Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah)

- The Paiute Indian tribe of Utah consists of five bands, Cedar Band, Indian Peaks Band, Kanosh Band, Koosharem Band, Shivwits Band.
- Tiwahe brings services together around the strength of family, ensuring that support is coordinated, culturally grounded and responsive to the real needs of our communities.
- The subcommittee must increase funding for the Tiwahe initiative to achieve parity between newly participating tribes and their original six pilot tribes.

Cody Shambo, Councilman (Fort Belknap Indian Community)

- Our top priority is the passage and funding of our Fort Belknap Indian community water Settlement Act, which affirms our water rights and settles damage claims against the U.S.
- The water projects the United States promised are failing or were never built. Our water rights claims are currently pending in court.
- We need these funds to ensure that our settlement is final and enforceable. We need a stable and permanent fund, just like the Department of Justice settlement fund.
- We also need funding to provide a safe place and opportunities for our youth.
- Indian youth die by suicide more than any group in 2019 our reservation was caught in a plague of youth suicide.
- Congress and this subcommittee have a treaty obligation to provide funding and unfortunately, there are too many funding restrictions.
- Increase funding for the Tiwahe program.

Michael Comes at Night, Councilman (Blackfeet Tribal Business Council, Blackfeet Nation)

- Testimony addresses how the federal government has failed to adequately fund law enforcement, tribal courts and transportation, road department for the Blackfeet nation.
- Officers work long hours with limited equipment and support from an underfunded department. Current law enforcement department is severely underfunded.
- Prosecutors get paid \$16 per hour, with currently over 4000 pending criminal cases.
- We especially need more funding for the tribal court and law enforcement to properly administer tribal justice system on the Blackfeet reservation.
- The tribe is effectively subsidizing a federal program that is supposed to maintain roads on tribal land and still struggling to meet the basic transportation needs on its reservation.
- On behalf of the Blackfeet nation, I respectfully request federal funding increase in these critical areas to improve public safety on the Blackfeet reservation.

[Michael Dolson](#), Chairman (Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes at Flathead Reservation)

- CSKT is an original self-governance tribe by carrying out all functions of IHS and BIA for decades, our local control and wise fiscal management of these programs have allowed us to dramatically improve the quality of services to our community.
- Full funding for IHS and additional funding for BIA is a critical component of our ability to adequately address mental illness and addiction.
- I encourage the subcommittee to continue to ensure that tribal law enforcement officers have the resources they need to protect our people.
- Our tribal Forestry and Fire Programs carry out a full array of services to prevent wildfires and quickly respond when fire strikes. Adequate funding for these activities and associated infrastructure helps to ensure responsible timber harvest, fuel reduction, force management for more fire resilient.

[Jestin Dupree](#), Councilman (Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Reservation)

- The Fort Peck reservation is located in northeast Montana, 45 miles west of North Dakota and 50 miles south of the Canadian border, our reservation spans more than 2 million acres.
- Tribe needs funding within IHS pertaining to behavioral health, dental health, and public nursing.
- When IHS fails to pay, providers turn the debts over to collection agencies, and then, in turn, our tribal members are their credit is dinged, and it's causing a lot of stress.
- Committee must direct IHS to provide a full report on any delinquent payments, including a timeline for repayment.
- Fort Peck has developed an independent judicial system for nearly 60 years. This level of responsibility requires stable, increased funding to maintain these services. The other areas of need facing our community include housing and social services.

[Ryman LeBeau](#), Chairman (Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe)

- Our Treaty provisions include law enforcement, healthcare, land base, and education.
- The Tribe has long gravel roads throughout the reservation that are BIA gravel roads, and there are segments that are dangerous to drive on as they get too muddy.
- We support more funding for BIA road maintenance in Fiscal Year 2027. \$58 million would greatly help our issues with roads, the school, our BIE school.
- Tribe is in the process of building a health and wellness center that would benefit from direct funding.

[Peter Lengkeek](#), Chairman (Crow Creek Sioux Tribe)

- Crow Creek is a direct service tribe, meaning the treaty and trust obligations are delivered directly by federal agencies like the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Indian Health Services.

- Federal staffing shortages and funding instability, disproportionality affect whether our tribal citizens receive basic services that are federal functions of the trust responsibility.
- The Crow Creek Sioux Tribe seek self-reliance and self-determination, but meaningful progress requires federal partners to fully meet their trust obligations.
- Crow Creek Sioux Tribe is seeking support from our federal partners in the conveyance of an abandoned law enforcement facility. We request \$1 million in Fiscal Year 27 to support predevelopment activities to repurpose an abandoned BIA law enforcement facility into a functioning tribal public safety facility.
- Crow Creek Sioux Tribe requests \$1 million in Fiscal Year 27 to expand family support programming focused on prevention and early intervention.

[Frank Star Comes Out](#), President (Oglala Sioux Tribe)

- Oglala Sioux Tribe, is a large land base federally recognized treaty tribe that has 54,000 members and 3.3 million acres of land.
- Law enforcement is severely underfunded, under resourced, and understaffed, causing a huge amount of crime and other issues.
- But it seems when funding is involved treaty obligations are forgotten.

[Steve Sitting Bear](#), Chairman (Standing Rock Sioux Tribe)

- We have about 16,000 members living on and off our reservation. Our reservation exists both in North and South Dakota.
- After decades of chronic underfunding, we lack the basic infrastructure that every government needs to secure and provide a homeland.
- In 2022, USDA reported \$270 million in agricultural revenue from the two counties overlapping our reservation. USDA also reported \$47 million as net profit. We don't see that profit.
- More than 100 years after allotment ended, we are still struggling to get basic land data. We need Realty staff with expertise experience and the technical resources to make our land data easily accessible.
- Understaffing in law enforcement continues to be a problem as recruitment remains an issue.
- The administration wants to supercharge 638, contracting, but Congress won't provide the full funding that we need to take over these programs.

[Lonna J. Street](#), Chairperson (Spirit Lake Nation)

- Treaty based funding for Indian nations and tribes is essential to our Spirit Lake native people and communities the Spirit Lake Nation consists of 8000 tribal members.
- Spirit Lake needs a new healthcare clinic to address ongoing health issues of its members; better roads to the Tribal school; kindergarten classroom.
- We need joint BIA and DOJ funding for annual tribal master law enforcement plans in FY 26 funding was less than \$600 million.

- Core operations for Fiscal Year 27 needs are \$1.9 billion in Fiscal Year 27 elementary and secondary needs roughly \$1 billion for elementary and secondary post-secondary in management should remain at least at 26 fiscal year funding level of 100 million.

[Jeff Wacoche](#), Chief (United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma)

- IHS unlawfully awarded a 638, contract to CNO for clinical services and PRC, despite knowing that we have never given consent. As a result, our members have been underserved and denied healthcare services.
- Our request for recurring funding has been met with bipartisan support in both chambers. But we have not been include in the FY24-25 or 26 enacted budgets.
- Providing healthcare funding for the UKB will have no impact on funding to any other tribe.

[Jacob Keyes](#), Chairman (Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma)

- Our reservation homelands are between Oklahoma City and Tulsa. We're a small tribe, just over 950 tribal members, but we're the largest employer in our rural area, which is a very rural area.
- The United States is failing to uphold its end of the deal. BIA, BIE and IHS employees touch every part of our lives and every tribal project. They're already underfunded and understaffed.
- Indian programs and services must be mandatory. Treaty programs and services cannot be subject to political changes. The Indian Health Service is an important example of this and it's time to make IHS appropriations mandatory.
- We need programs like the BIA guarantee loan program, with just \$13 million the loan guarantee program can support and guarantee \$200 million in funding for tribal businesses.

[Rick Sylestine](#), Chairman (Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas)

- We're asking the subcommittee to include, include report language in the Fiscal Year 2027, Interior Appropriations Bill that number one confirms that the eligibility of adopting Public Law 280, trials for pl 93, 638, law enforcement funding number two, appropriate \$7 million in the Public Safety and Justice account for these tribes.

