

## House Appropriations

### **Budget Hearing- Department of Interior**

**April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

**Witness:** Interior Secretary Doug Burgum

#### **Highlights:**

The FY27 Interior–Environment hearing raised bipartisan concerns that proposed budget cuts to the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Bureau of Indian Education could undermine federal trust and treaty obligations, harm Tribal education, public safety, and wildlife programs, and strain service delivery in Indian Country. Members also discussed agriculture- and rural-related impacts tied to public land management, including grazing, wildfire suppression, and resource access affecting Tribal and agricultural communities.

#### **Key Points:**

- Trust and Treaty Responsibilities
  - Multiple members emphasized that the Department of the Interior plays a central role in upholding federal trust and treaty obligations to Tribal Nations and expressed concern that the FY27 budget does not adequately reflect those responsibilities.
  - Concerns were raised that Tribes already operate programs with limited resources, and that additional funding reductions would have serious impacts on service delivery and Tribal self-governance.
- Budget Cuts to Tribal Programs
  - The proposal includes significant reductions to Indian Country programs, including:
    - Approximately 27% cut to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).
    - Roughly 23–32% cut to the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), depending on program area.
  - Members flagged these reductions as conflicting with Interior’s trust responsibilities and warned they would directly affect Tribal education, governance, and community services.
- Tribal Wildlife and Environmental Programs
  - Proposed elimination of State and Tribal Wildlife Grants drew concern from members, who warned this would undermine Tribal conservation capacity and sovereignty over wildlife management.

- Energy and Economic Development in Tribal Communities
  - Interior leadership stated that the department intends to support Tribal sovereignty and economic opportunity, including permitting for energy and resource development on Tribal lands.
  - Some members highlighted examples of Tribal renewable energy projects (e.g., solar access on reservations) as critical for addressing high energy costs and infrastructure gaps in Indian Country.
- Public Lands, Grazing, and Ranching
  - Interior officials stated that regulatory reforms are intended to reduce barriers for agriculture-related activities on public lands, including ranching and grazing.
  - Members from Western states emphasized the importance of balancing conservation with agricultural access to federal lands.
- Wildfire and Agricultural Impacts
  - The hearing discussed the consolidation of federal wildfire programs into a new U.S. Wildland Fire Service.
  - Officials highlighted that unmanaged wildfires negatively affect rangelands, livestock operations, timber resources, and rural economies, including Tribal and agricultural communities.
- Timber and Resource Management
  - Interior leadership noted concerns that wildfire damage and regulatory complexity have harmed the timber industry and related rural jobs, including in agriculturally dependent regions.