

## House Committee on Natural Resources

Department of Interior FY27 Budget Hearing

May 13, 2026

Witness: [Doug Burgum](#), Secretary of U.S. Department of Interior (DOI)

### Highlights:

The hearing focused on the Interior Department's FY27 budget, with lawmakers raising concerns about proposed reductions to Tribal programs, education, and infrastructure, as well as broader agency changes. Interior leadership highlighted priorities such as partnerships, public safety, and economic development in Indian Country, while some Members questioned whether the proposal maintains sufficient federal support for Tribal communities and trust responsibilities.

### Key points:

- Trust Responsibilities acknowledged, but criticized in practice
  - Secretary Burgum stated that the DOI “honors federal trust responsibilities and the unique relationship with Tribal nations” and committed to consultation, transparency, and engagement with Tribes.
  - Multiple Representatives argued that Tribes are not receiving adequate consultation and federal obligations are being undermined by budget cuts and delays.
- Major proposed funding cuts to Tribal programs
  - Representatives highlighted significant reductions including:
    - Over \$1 billion in cuts to Tribal programs
    - \$744 million cut to Bureau of Indian Affairs
    - \$150 million cut to Tribal colleges and universities
    - ~85% reduction in Tribal school construction funding
      - Representative Melanie Stansbury (D-NM) said that these are potentially the largest reductions since before the Reagan era.
- Tribal consultations concern on land and cultural resources
  - Destruction of Las Playas Intaglio, a culturally significant site of the Tohono O'odham Nation occurred during border wall construction. Administration acknowledged damage cannot be undone and issued apologies.
  - Broader concerns were stated on the lack of consultation on border infrastructure, land management decisions (Chaco Canyon) and education policy changes.

- Tribal water settlements and drought response
  - Discussion included the Hualapai water rights settlement funding (\$58 million in FY27 budget) and the impacts from the Colorado River drought.
  - The WaterSmart program was also discussed supporting Tribes and local governments, but the budget proposes eliminating several programs.
- Economic development framed around self-sufficiency and permitting reform
  - Administration emphasis was given to Tribal sovereignty through economic development. They spoke on the need to improve permitting processes to attract investment to Tribal lands.
    - Federal permitting delays discourage private-sector investment on Tribal lands was identified as the major barrier.