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## Public Safety & Justice

In 2013, the bi-partisan Indian Law and Order Commission (ILOC) released its report to Congress and the President concluding that “[h]ow we choose to deal with the current public safety crisis in Native America—a crisis largely of the federal government’s own making over more than a century of failed laws and policies— can set our generation apart from the legacy that remains one of [the] great unfinished challenges of the Civil Rights Movement. Lives are at stake, and there is no time to waste.” The public safety problems that continue to plague tribal communities are the result of decades of gross underfunding for tribal criminal justice systems; a uniquely complex jurisdictional scheme; and the historic, abject failure by the federal government to fulfill its public safety obligations on American Indian and Alaska Native lands. Residents and visitors on tribal lands deserve the safety and security that is taken for granted outside of Indian Country.

Congress has taken historic steps in recent years with the passage of the Tribal Law and Order Act in 2010 and the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 (VAWA 2013) to begin to address some of the structural barriers to public safety in tribal communities. For the promise of these laws to be fully realized, however, they must be fully implemented. Implementation cannot occur without sufficient resources for tribal justice systems and ongoing coordination and consultation between various federal agencies and tribal governments. The Department of Justice recognized this reality in its recently issued Statement of Principles.<sup>24</sup> The Statement articulates DOJ’s belief that stable funding at sufficient levels for essential tribal justice functions is critical to the long-term growth of tribal institutions.

Increased and targeted funding in the following program areas will have a significant impact on safety in tribal communities for tribal citizens, residents, and visitors to tribal lands. Highly-functioning criminal justice systems and basic, on-the-ground police protection are fundamental priorities of any government; tribal governments are no different.

### Key Recommendations

#### Shared Responsibility:

#### Departments of the Interior, Justice, and Health and Human Services

Interior – Environment; Commerce, Justice, Science; and Labor, HHS Appropriations Bills

### **Tribal Law & Order Act**

- *Fully fund each provision of the TLOA that authorizes additional funding for law and order programs that affect tribal nations, both for FY 2016 and future years.*

The Tribal Law & Order Act (TLOA) takes a much-needed, comprehensive approach to improving public safety on Indian reservations and reforming the entire justice system in Indian Country—from prevention, to law enforcement, to courts, to detention, and to rehabilitation. However, the TLOA has yet to receive the appropriations required to meet its goals. The ILOC report highlights these inadequacies. Critical investments in tribal justice systems must be made immediately. The safety of American Indians and Alaska Natives depends upon it.

### **Department of the Interior**

#### Interior – Environment Appropriations Bill

- *Allocate additional funding to the Bureau of Indian Affairs to increase base funding for tribal courts and to finally fund the Indian Tribal Justice Act at \$82 million.*

The highest priority with regard to Bureau of Indian Affairs funding in the area of law enforcement is to increase base funding for tribal courts and to fund the Indian Tribal Justice Act. It is well-documented by the US Commission on Civil Rights<sup>25</sup> and the Government Accountability Office that tribal courts have been historically underfunded by the federal government and that this underfunding negatively impacts their law enforcement operations. Although there have been federal grants – particularly through the US Department of Justice (DOJ) – to address discrete justice and safety concerns, those grants are time-limited and do not support the ongoing and daily operating needs of tribal courts.

Originally enacted in 1993, the Indian Tribal Justice Act authorized an additional \$50 million per year for each of seven years for tribal court base funding. In today's dollars this would be \$82 million per year. Despite numerous congressional reauthorizations of the Act over the past couple of decades – most recently in TLOA – funds have not been appropriated to implement the Act. VAWA 2013 has the potential to add even more costs to the operating needs of tribal courts. The promise of this much-needed base funding must be fulfilled.

- *Increase funding for Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) law enforcement by at least \$200 million over the FY 2015 funding level of \$328 million, including an increase in funds for officer recruitment and training and for tribal detention facilities operations and maintenance.*

More than 200 tribal police departments, ranging from small departments with only two officers to those with more than 200 officers, help to maintain public safety on the more than 50 million acres of tribal lands within the 48 contiguous states. Tribal law enforcement officers are usually the first responders to crime scenes on tribal lands, but their current funding lags well behind that of their non-tribal counterparts.

The BIA recently conducted an analysis of law enforcement needs pursuant to the Tribal Law and Order Act, and found that current funding meets only 42 percent of need for law enforcement, and an additional \$337 million is needed to bring staffing up to the levels up to the median county government law enforcement levels based on population. The unmet need for law enforcement programs is estimated using a ratio of officers per 1,000 residents. The data used to determine the ratio are found in the FBI Uniform Crime Report (UCR).<sup>26</sup> Based

upon the 2010 UCR staffing tables, county agencies have an average of 2.8 officers per 1,000 residents.<sup>27</sup> By comparison, virtually no tribal police department has more than two officers per 1,000 residents. To put this in further perspective, Indian Country law enforcement officers patrol approximately two percent of the landmass of the United States and assist one percent of the population, but represent less than 0.004 percent of the total of 675,734 state, city, and county law enforcement officers in the United States.

- ***Allocate additional resources to the BIA to enable it to expand its Safe Indian Communities Initiative to include at least four additional tribes.***

In 2009, the Secretary of the Interior and the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs established a High Priority Performance Goal (HPPG) to reduce violent crime by five percent on four targeted reservations over a two-year period. To do so, the Department of the Interior instituted a highly-effective community policing strategy known as the Safe Indian Communities Initiative. Since its inception, there has been a 35 percent overall reduction in violent crime across the four targeted tribal communities, far exceeding the initiative's goal. The Safe Indian Communities Initiative achieved a 68 percent decrease in violent crime at the Mescalero Reservation in New Mexico, a 40 percent reduction at Rocky Boy's in Montana, and a 27 percent reduction in violent crime at Standing Rock in North and South Dakota.

Increased BIA appropriations are necessary to ensure that the success of the Initiative continues. Indian tribes would like to see the Initiative expanded further to reach additional tribes. The Safe Indian Communities Initiative has been a proven success, and these are the types of efforts that can make a real difference on the ground, provided there is funding available to pursue them.

## Department of Justice

### Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Bill

#### **Tribal Grants across the Department of Justice**

- ***Eliminate competitive grant funding process and utilize Justice Department appropriations as base funding where tribes and tribal courts themselves determine their own priorities.***

One of the most significant issues with DOJ funding is that it is competitive funding for whatever issue DOJ deems the priority. In order to obtain this funding, tribes – on behalf of their tribal courts – must compete against each other under DOJ's priorities and guidelines. In the end, the tribes that have the financial and human resources to employ experienced grant writers end up receiving funding, while the under-resourced tribes may be left without. Moreover, tribes cannot count on funding continuing beyond the current grant period, and Indian Country has countless stories of successful programs disappearing at the end of a two or three year grant cycle.

Instead, Justice Department appropriations should serve as base funding for tribally-determined priorities. The Administration has proposed a seven percent tribal set-aside across Office of Justice Programs (OJP) programs for the past several years. While this is a welcome step in the right direction, the set-aside should also include DOJ grant funding outside of OJP and should be allocated as flexible base funding. All of our specific recommendations below should be folded into the new flexible base funding model.

## Office of Justice Programs

- ***Create a seven percent tribal set-aside from funding for all discretionary Office of Justice Programs (OJP) programs, ensure that those funds, along with tribal funds outside of OJP, are allocated as flexible base funding.***

In recent years, Congress has rejected the proposed seven percent tribal set-aside of funding from discretionary Office of Justice Programs (OJP) programs – which had previously garnered support by both the House and Senate CJS Appropriations Subcommittees – and drastically cut funding for tribal justice programs across the board. In FY 2012, funding for tribal law enforcement assistance within OJP was reduced to only \$38 million—representing a \$12 million cut from the actual FY 2011 amount and a mere fraction of the \$100 million proposed by the Senate for FY 2011. For FY 2015, this amount was further reduced to \$35 million. The Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Tribal Resources Grant Program and the Tribal Youth Program also experienced very large cuts.

Congress should adopt the seven percent tribal set-aside in OJP funding, which would restore funding levels for DOJ tribal justice programs to a more appropriate level. The seven percent tribal set-aside of OJP programs is particularly important to tribes, because it would allow for a more flexible funding structure. In 2010, the Department of Justice launched its Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation (CTAS). CTAS attempts to streamline the grant application process for tribes, enabling them to submit a single application for DOJ programs, as opposed to previous years in which they were required to submit multiple grant applications. However, this streamlined application model will not achieve its intended success unless and until it is accompanied by a streamlined funding mechanism.

A seven percent OJP tribal set-aside would streamline 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. Further, the tribal set-aside gives tribes the flexibility to develop a detailed strategy on how best to spend those resources.

- ***Create a 10 percent set-aside for tribal governments from distributions out of the Crime Victims Fund and combine these funds with other DOJ resources to provide flexible base-funding to tribal justice systems.***

The Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) is the largest source of federal funding for crime victims. Currently, the Crime Victims Fund contains more than \$10 billion, which is funded through fines collected in federal criminal cases. In FY 2015, distributions from the Crime Victims Fund (CVF) were increased more than three times to over \$2.3 billion. Despite having the highest rates of crime victimization in the country, none of these funds are directed to tribal governments. NCAI recommends that 10 percent of CVF distributions should be directed to tribal governments in order to ensure that tribal crime victims are able to access victim services and victim compensation through their tribal government.

- ***If Congress declines to adopt the flexible seven percent set-aside across OJP programs, restore FY 2010 levels of \$25 million in funding for the Tribal Youth Program under the Juvenile Accountability Block Grants program.***



Although American Indian and Alaska Native children comprise only 2.2 percent of the overall youth population, they are arrested at a rate of more than two-to-three times that of other ethnic groups. According to a recent DOJ report, “[s]ubstance abuse, depression, and gang involvement fuel a vast majority of the offenses for which American Indian juveniles are disproportionately confined.” Currently, there is very little financial support for tribal youth programs, justice systems, and prevention programs. Funding for the Tribal Youth Program has decreased significantly in recent years and should be restored to its FY 2010 level of \$25 million.

- ***Increase funding for Part D of the JJDP – Research, Evaluation, Technical Assistance, and Training – and include a corresponding tribal set-aside to ensure that at least a portion of appropriated funds are required to be spent on projects centered on tribal youth.***

Tribes need access to accurate data in order to know the nature, magnitude, and pervasiveness of the problems facing juveniles in their communities. These data are critical to developing effective strategies to address those problems. A comprehensive nationwide study is needed to collect data on Native youth in the justice system, compiling information like the percentage of Native youth in the justice system, whether their educational and cultural needs are being met, and the number of those who have disabilities. Funds could also be used to implement better testing and early intervention procedures for Native children to ensure that problems are being acknowledged and addressed before being manifested in the form of delinquent or criminal behavior.

- ***If Congress declines to adopt the flexible seven percent set-aside across OJP programs, provide funding for the Tribal Civil and Criminal Legal Assistance, Training and Technical Assistance (TCCLA) grant program at a level of \$3 million.***

The Indian Tribal Justice Technical and Legal Assistance Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-559) authorized the Department of Justice (DOJ) to award grants to non-profit entities such as the 25 Indian Legal Services programs connected with the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) to provide civil and criminal legal assistance to both tribal governments and their justice systems and to individual indigent tribal citizens. The Tribal Civil and Criminal Legal Assistance, Training and Technical Assistance (TCCLA) grant program is funded separately from DOJ's Consolidated Tribal Assistance Solicitation (CTAS) program.

For the past five years, a consortium of Indian Legal Services programs operating in 23 states has been awarded funding under TCCLA. Most recently, in FY 2014, the Indian Legal Services programs were awarded a total of just over \$1.25 million in awards to provide civil and criminal legal assistance to thousands of Native American clients, including juveniles, who meet federal poverty guidelines. In addition to individual representation, Indian Legal Services programs are currently assisting more than 160 tribes and/or tribal judicial systems.

In many instances, these Indian Legal Services programs have been “on the ground” for decades, an integral part of the legal structure of the reservation communities they serve, and guided by boards or advisory groups of local tribal citizens and others. In affording access to justice for individuals, the programs' individual legal representation has expanded from traditional legal issues such as employment, disability benefits claims and housing issues to include domestic violence, pro se assistance, family member prisoner visitation, re-entry and expunctions for certain criminal charges, and child welfare, guardianship and adoption. Similarly, assisting tribal governments and their justice systems to be grounded in solid codes and laws now includes such assistance as tribal court development, restructuring and improvement, development of tribal dispute resolution and peacemaker/mediation systems, drafting of civil and criminal codes, including children's codes, and rules of procedure, and training of tribal court and justice systems personnel and tribal court lay advocates and

guardians ad litem. Lay advocate and peacemaker trainings have been done with tribal colleges and university law schools. Several Indian Legal Services programs are working to assist tribes with revisions to their criminal codes for compliance with the Tribal Law and Order Act and the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013.

## Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

- ***Increase funding of tribal law enforcement programs under the Department of Justice's Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Grants to \$52 million.***

Since the creation of the COPS Office under the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, the COPS Office has awarded over 2,000 grants totaling more than \$400 million to tribal nations to hire more than 1,700 new or redeployed law enforcement officers. It has also helped tribes to obtain necessary law enforcement training, equipment, vehicles, and technology. Through its Tribal Resources Grant Program and Tribal Methamphetamine Program and historical programs and funding initiatives such as the Tribal Hiring Renewal Grant Program (THRGP), Tribal Mental Health and Community Safety Initiative, and the Tribal Court Pilot Program, the COPS Office has taken a proactive approach toward addressing the needs of tribal nations and has become one of the primary resources available to tribal law enforcement agencies attempting to develop and maintain a fundamental policing infrastructure and upgrade outdated equipment. Yet, there is still a tremendous unmet need within tribal justice systems for more COPS funding.

The COPS Office has acknowledged that due to limited resources, it has not been able to adequately fund tribal justice systems, particularly in the area of hiring/retaining tribal law enforcement officers. In a report released in December 2010, the COPS Office described its practice of intermittent funding as "problematic," especially "when referring to hiring of officers." Hiring more tribal police officers should be a top priority for reasons of public safety. Indian Country urges Congress to significantly increase funding for tribal law enforcement programs under the COPS program.

## Department of Justice

Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Bill

### Office on Violence Against Women

- ***Fully fund the programs authorized in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), including the funds authorized for tribal implementation of VAWA special domestic violence criminal jurisdiction.***

It is estimated that one in three Indian women will be raped and that six in ten will be physically assaulted in their lifetimes.<sup>28</sup> This violence threatens the lives of Native women and the future of American Indian tribes and Alaska Native villages. No area of need is more pressing or compelling than the plight of American Indian and Alaska Native women and children fleeing physical and sexual violence.

The Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) provides funding to tribal governments to address violence against women in their communities. OVW's largest source of funding for tribal governments is the Grants to Tribal Governments Program, which is funded via statutory allocations from other OVW programs. Fully-funding these OVW programs results in full funding for the Grants to Tribal Governments Program.

On March 7, 2013, President Obama signed into law the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act (VAWA 2013) which recognizes and affirms the inherent sovereign authority of Indian tribes to exercise Special Domestic

Violence Criminal Jurisdiction (SDVCJ) over all persons—Indian and non-Indian—who commit crimes of dating violence, domestic violence, and violations of protection orders within Indian country. The bill authorized \$5 million for tribes to implement the new VAWA provisions and otherwise strengthen tribal justice systems.

Tribal justice systems require additional resources to exercise this new jurisdictional authority and VAWA funding streams are going to be critical to the success of tribal efforts to combat violence against women in their communities.

- ***Continue to fund the Indian Country Sexual Assault Clearinghouse at \$500,000.***

The Office on Violence Against Women is in the process of establishing a national clearinghouse on the sexual assault of Native women, which will provide a resource where tribes can request free on-site training and technical assistance on a host of sexual assault-related topics, including development of tribal sexual assault and domestic violence codes, sexual assault forensic evidence collection training, and more. If fully funded, this clearinghouse has the potential to be a tremendous resource for tribes, law enforcement officials, medical professionals, and victim advocates.