

**Written and Oral Testimony of Nancy R. Martine-Alonzo
Secretary/Treasurer
Ramah Navajo Chapter-Ramah Band of Navajos**

**Submitted to the US Congress:
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENTAL
AND RELATED AGENCIES
FY 2014 FEDERAL BUDGET REQUEST, SUPPORT AND CONCERNS FOR:
DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR (DOI)--BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS (BIA)**

April 25, 2013

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

My name is Nancy R. Martine-Alonzo, Secretary/Treasurer of the Ramah Navajo Chapter, Ramah Band of Navajos. Thank you for the opportunity to submit our written testimony for consideration under the DOI-BIA FY 2014 Budget. Our testimony focuses on the (1) devastating impact of the federal sequestration, (2) retention of the BIA-Ramah Navajo Agency at the local level, (3) Additional funding request for appropriation of **\$2,845,610.00** for FY 2014, and (4) support for the President's FY 2014 budget request for Indian Affairs and ensure the increases reach the tribal and organizational level where services are provided, as well as hold Indian Health Services and BIA Contracted funds harmless. The Ramah Navajo Chapter also supports and concurs with the Ramah Navajo School Board, Inc. testimony.

Introduction:

The Ramah Band of Navajos is located in west central New Mexico, geographically separated from the Navajo reservation with a population of approximately 3,500 members. Ramah Navajos occupy about 300 square miles (approximately 146,953 acres) of "checkerboard" territory—lands owned by the Band, by individual non-Navajos, by the Navajo Tribe, by the State of New Mexico, and by the Federal government. The Ramah Navajo community is surrounded with approximately 1200 non-Indian residents throughout the community. In 1984 the Ramah Navajo Chapter with authorization from the Navajo Nation successfully contracted several programs through the P.L. 93-638 Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDA) that includes: Natural Resources/Agriculture, Forestry, Law Enforcement/Detention, Real Estate Services, Transportation, Facilities Management, and Water Rights and Community Planning programs. Ramah Navajo School Board, Inc., an arm of the Ramah Navajo Chapter contracted many of the education programs, HIP, Community Services and many of the Indian Health Services. The Ramah Band of Navajos has successfully been contracting these programs for over 40 years in which a government-to-government relationship has evolved and is recognized by the federal government as such. Ramah Navajo as a community has exercised the Indian Self-Determination to the highest degree that impacts almost every Indian tribe in the county and resulted in a strong partnership with the BIA-Ramah Navajo Agency (RNA) in meeting the needs of the Ramah Navajo people.

- 1) Federal Sequestration impact currently caused: (A) Eradication of the BIA-RNA and Road Maintenance, Fire Management and Executive Direction services.**

A) Reduction of Contract Program Services:

Over several years, The BIA-DOI has never fully partnered nor advocated on behalf of Indian Tribes and organizations contracting under ISDA. Instead Tribes have had to advocate and struggle to maintain the ISDA funding. Once again under the current sequestration Act, DOI-BIA did not attempt to keep the impact at a minimum. Instead, the BIA created confusion through inconsistent decisions of the Secretary of the Interior's proposal to streamline the current DOI-BIA organizational structure. Consultations were NOT provided by the DOI-BIA, as indicated in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 DOI-BIA Green Book, to tribes who are impacted by the budget cuts. Although we have met with our congressional representatives who have requested of DOI-BIA for budget cut justifications on our behalf, none has been provided. Tremendous and severe impacts are in effect with current budget cuts affecting the vital programs resulting in elimination or consolidation at the end of this month. These vital programs are: Road Maintenance program, Fire Management program and the Agency Executive Direction which has no assurances to maintaining oversight for over \$30 million dollars beyond FY 2013 for both the BIA and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). If the Ramah Navajo community loses the BIA-RNA as proposed by the DOI-BIA, the Ramah Band of Navajos will be submersed in an indifferent sea of bureaucratic streamlining that will further erode the government-to-government relationship essential to our community's direct services provided to our people.

Although we are providing needed services within our existing contracted programs, the amount of funding we receive each FY is never sufficient. Instead of receiving increases to our Annual Funding Agreement, we are told to utilize the previous FY budgeted amounts; this has been the case in previous years and has resulted in continued increase of our unmet needs. Now, the federal sequestration has affected our efforts and has elevated the negative impact to Ramah Navajo's most critical programs.

Up to this year, Ramah Navajo BIA Agency has maintained over 452 miles within the BIA Road Inventory System under the Road Maintenance program. Due to elevations between 7000 to 7800 feet, and greater periods of severe weather conditions, it is vital to retain the Roads Maintenance programs at the local level. Our only option now is to contract the roads maintenance program, but even with the increases for road maintenance this FY; there will not be enough funds to operate to the end of the fiscal year. These roads serve the people's life lines for educational, health, social, emergencies/police and community services. More importantly, the daily transportation of the students to BIA funded Pine Hill Schools and Ramah Public School provides opportunities to become productive citizens.

2) **Eradication of the BIA-Ramah Navajo Agency:**

After years of neglect since its inception, the BIA-federal agency/offices that were given the responsibility to oversee the Ramah Band of Navajos, the Ramah Navajo community determined the need to establish the BIA-RNA. The paramount justification is to ensure trust responsibilities for daily operational business and services within this isolated rural community. Prior to the establishment of this RNA the community literally had dirt trails which served as roads, substandard housing, no health facilities, unemployment was at 99%,

and an Education system was practically non-existence. Unemployment is now at 70%, which is an improvement over the years in spite of the increased population. The inception of BIA-RNA provided for paved roads and road improvement; this access afforded Ramah Navajo the opportunity to address many infrastructures such as an educational system by contracting BIA-BIE programs and has graduated more than 900 students and over 150 community members have received post-secondary degrees.

RNA is the only Agency within the BIA-SWRO that maintains the largest P.L. 93-638 contracts that are currently operated by Ramah Navajo Chapter and the Ramah Navajo School Board, Inc. among 27 Tribes and Pueblos. The BIA-RNA still maintains oversight to monitor and has signature authority for the P.L. 93-638 contracted programs. The BIA staff may be small, but the work is tremendous and essential. Again, we wish to emphasize the critical importance for RNA to maintain this signature authority at the local level. Since 1986, because of this signatory authority, Ramah Navajo Chapter and Ramah Navajo School Board, Inc. has successfully contracted program through the P.L. 93-638. Please understand the Federal Sequestration affects the “Signature Authority” of Ramah Navajo. The BIA-RNA has the second largest Individual Indian Allotments within BIA-SWRO with a recorded 240 original allotments which has over 3000 inherent interest. These allotments are contracted by the Ramah Navajo Chapter and BIA maintains the trust responsibility for all of the Trust Services contracts.

The programs provided are entirely separate from the Navajo Nation programs, and the BIA Navajo Region. Ramah Navajo needs to retain the BIA-RNA at the local level and to remain under the BIA Southwest Regional Office. Ramah Navajo Chapter has 3 mature contracts and 7 project specific contracts with the DOI-BIA consisting of 15 programs with a total of 56 regular full time employees and 28 temporary employees. Ramah Navajo School Board, Inc., has several mature contracts consisting of numerous programs under BIA, BIE and Indian Health Services with over 200 regular full time and temporary employees.

This long steady relationship between Ramah Navajo and the BIA-SWRO has been endorsed by the Navajo Nation Council pursuant to Resolution No. CJY-61-94, and is also in accord with the Navajo Nation Law 26 N.N.C. , Navajo Nation Local Governance Act as enacted in 1998.

3. Additional Funding Request for Appropriation of \$3,845,610.00 for FY2014

(A) REQUEST: BIA-Office of Justice Services Funding for the Operation and Maintenance of the Detention Facility. \$1,815,610.00 (Repeated Request for the past 3 years)

- a. Increase funding for new Detention facility for Start-up and Operation & Maintenance cost.
- b. Establish and identify as recurring funding under the Ramah Navajo Chapter’s Correction Department Annual Funding Agreement with the DOI-BIA.

(B) REQUEST: BIA Funding for Natural Resource Training Facilities. \$650,000.00 (Repeated Request for the past 3 years)

- a. Funding to complete the Agricultural complex in the amount of \$400,000; and
- b. Establish and identify as recurring funding of \$250,000 for increased staffing and operation.

(C) REQUEST: BIA Funding for Real Estate Unmet Infrastructure needs: \$380,000.00 (Repeated Request for the past 3 years)

- a. Four (4) Fire Proof Filing Cabinets: \$5,000.00; and
- b. Real Estate Services Building; 4-5 office space, meeting and filing room: \$250,00.00
- c. Establish and identify as recurring funding of \$125,000 for two (2) additional staff.

4. SUPPORT: President's FY 2014 Bureau of Indian Affairs and Bureau of Indian Education budget for the amount of \$2.6 billion.

- a. Request for committee to support and advocate holding the funding for Indian Country in FY2014 Harmless and not be subjected to budget cuts.
- b. (b) The Ramah Band of Navajos is requesting for your support for the President's FY 2014 budget in the administration's continued commitment to meeting the government's responsibilities to Indian Country for the much needed services and to promote economic development, improve education, and strengthen law enforcement and justice administration
- c. Appropriate the FY 2014 funding to reach the local level as opposed to headquarter, Regional and Area levels to provide funding for the most needed programs and services for Indian Country as established through the P.L. 93-638 Annual Funding Agreements.

In closing, the Ramah Navajo Chapter has been very successful and diligent stewards in operating programs under the P.L. 93-638 and has been meeting the needs of the Band of Ramah Navajos. We value the funds that are appropriated by Congress that has made a difference in the lives of our people. The Ramah Navajo Chapter appreciates the continued support of Congress as it strives to make funding and laws available for Indian Nations and their organization to provide services to their people. We would be happy to provide you with further information on any of the foregoing projects.

Respectfully Submitted:



Nancy R. Martine-Alonzo, Secretary/Treasurer
Ramah Navajo Chapter
HCR 61 Box 13
Ramah, New Mexico 87321
505-775-7132 Fax 505-775-7103
RNC E-mail Contact: nmalonzo@aaihb.org