



Chairman Ken Calvert

*Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations*

**Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Oversight Hearing: Indian Affairs
March 16, 2016
Opening Statement**

Good afternoon and welcome to today's hearing on the fiscal year 2017 budget proposal for Indian Affairs. I'm going to be brief because we have a lot of ground to cover on this busy afternoon.

Funding for Indian country has been and will continue to be a nonpartisan funding priority for this subcommittee for fiscal year 2017. Together we have been making a concerted push over the past several years to make incremental improvements in the lives of American Indians and Alaska Natives—particularly in healthcare, education, and law enforcement.

This has been a partnership, and I want to thank several of our key partners for being here today to testify. Our first panel includes Larry Roberts, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs; Mike Black, Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs; and Monty Roessel, Director of the Bureau of Indian Education. Gentlemen, thank you for being here today.

For the past few years, at this subcommittee's request, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) has been another key partner on Indian education matters. What started in 2012 with a seemingly simple question of comparing per-student funding inside and outside the BIE, has grown into something much more complex. The GAO recently completed another study on BIE facilities condition and management, and I've asked them here today to be on the second panel to report their findings and recommendations.

Before we begin, I'll just make a few comments about the fiscal year 2017 budget proposal for Indian Affairs. This Administration has put its partners on this subcommittee in a tight spot, by raising expectations throughout Indian country that we will struggle to meet.

The President's budget circumvents the discretionary spending caps that he signed into law. That is how he is able to propose a \$136 million increase for Indian Affairs and a \$377 million increase for the Indian Health Service—without a realistic offset. But current law requires discretionary spending to stay relatively flat in fiscal year 2017.

So this subcommittee's challenge will be to find the money from within our 302(b) allocation to pay for the "have-to-do's" without cutting the popular "nice-to-do's" by so much that we can't pass a bill.

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