

Martin Harvier
President
Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community
Testimony before the House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee for Interior Appropriations and Related Agencies
February 12, 2020

Chairwoman McCollum and Ranking Member Joyce, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony before the Subcommittee regarding the Fiscal Year 2021 Interior Appropriations. My name is Martin Harvier and I am the President of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community (SRPMIC), located in the metropolitan Phoenix area in Arizona. In brief, our Community was established by Executive Order in 1879 and today is nearly 53,000 acres and has nearly 11,000 enrolled members.

From health care and transportation, to law enforcement, the annual federal funding provided to the SRPMIC to fulfill the federal trust responsibility is vital to our day to day operations. While I will focus on just a few priorities for this testimony, to truly fulfill its responsibility, the federal government must increase funding for nearly every Indian program across the board.

HEALTHCARE:

In 2019 our Community entered into a Title V Construction Project Agreement with the Indian Health Service (IHS) to design and build a much needed new Phoenix Indian Medical Center Northeast Ambulatory Care Center (NEACC) on Community land. Design work related to this project has been completed and construction recently started. It is anticipated the construction of the facility will be completed by December of 2021. As is normal for a new IHS facility we will need additional funds from Congress to equip and staff the new facility in anticipation of a January 1, 2022 opening date. The SRPMIC will be working with the IHS over the upcoming year to ensure they include the NEACC staffing package in the budget request the Agency will propose to Congress in February 2021. We look forward to working with this Committee over the upcoming 18 months to ensure this staffing package is executed in a timely way.

SELF-GOVERNANCE:

As you know, there are two primary ways for tribal governments to receive funding from the federal government: direct service and self-governance. As a matter of policy and practice the Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community believes in self-governance. We fully endorse the philosophy of removing the federal bureaucracy from tribal programs and to allow tribes to directly use federal funding in the most efficient manner to meet tribal need.

The Community has worked successfully to transition the administration of many essential government functions from BIA control to the responsibility of our Community. To date, we have assumed responsibility for administering a host of programs from trust services, detention and corrections, social services, to road maintenance, law enforcement, probate, and most recently the Land Title and Records function.

We are proud to say our experience with tribal self-governance compacting has been very successful and is a perfect example of the most efficient use of the federal dollar. However, the one caveat that I would stress to the Committee and the Congress is that funding for BIA programs continues to be woefully inadequate.

I believe funding for Self-Governance Programs should be the highest priority for the Administration and the Congress to fund for the reason mentioned above. I am hopeful that you will continue to invest in Indian Country and in tribal self-governance as you draft the FY 2021 appropriations bill.

As you may be aware, tribes begin an internal process with the BIA and the Office of Self-Governance about two years ahead of the fiscal year. We outline every government function that the tribe administers and oversees and the anticipated costs associated with every line item under that program. For most, the amount received from BIA is a mere fraction of the actual cost to administer.

As such, I would like to draw your attention to a couple of points as they relate to self-governance, including transportation programs and other critical programs.

The bottom line is that federal tribal transportation programs are significantly underfunded. For example, on an annual basis our Community receives \$92,000 from the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), for road maintenance. This represents 6.5 percent of the total need. As a result, the Community supplements the meager federal funding with nearly \$1.4 million dollars each year. For example, the Community received only receives \$1,300 per mile, per year, from the BIA to maintain BIA roads. In addition, the BIA, itself, estimates the total maintenance need is \$10,000 per mile, per year. However, the actual cost that we estimate for annual road maintenance is \$11,145 per mile, per year.

Based on the BIA estimate the annual road maintenance need is \$720,000.00

Further, for the Community's 5-year new-construction plan, BIA funding will provide only 3%, or \$7 million dollars, of the overall budget. Clearly, there is not enough money to meet the basic **maintenance** needs of our current roads, let alone the funding necessary to support a robust 21st century transportation system. As a result, we believe an increase in funds for tribal transportation programs will help tribes establish, maintain and perpetuate tribal transportation programs.

Second, Law Enforcement and Detention services are critical parts of tribal programming. For example, our detention and corrections program cost \$6.8 million annually, however the Community receives only \$206,000 dollars in its base funding agreement with BIA. This represents only 3% of the annual budget for detention and correction programs, with the Community backfilling the remaining 97%. We are not suggesting the Federal Government is responsible for funding 100% of these programs, but we do encourage you to seek more equitable funding levels.

Similarly, for law enforcement the need in our community is \$3,836,000 per year according to the BIA Law Enforcement Cost estimating table. The tribe currently receives \$ 3,272,449 per year, leaving an unfunded obligation of \$ 563,551 per year. The lack of adequate funding hampers the tribe's ability to provide adequate public safety for the tribal members. From fiscal year 2015 – 2016 calls for service increased 20%. Additional funds will enable the tribe to reduce response times and provide a bigger, much needed presence in Community.

CULTURAL RESOURCES:

Protecting cultural resources is a vitally important objective for the SRPMIC. So much so that it has established a designated Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) that is a liaison to all agencies, internal and external, on the care, preservation, and repatriation of cultural resources that have ties to the SRPMIC.

As such, the SRPMIC is concerned about recent actions by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) that may disrupt the cultural resources on USFS lands that borders the SRPMIC. In brief, the SRPMIC borders the Tonto National Forest on our eastern boundary. As many local, tribal, state, and federal stakeholders have been attempting solve an issue related to the management of wild horses in the area the USFS has recently notified the SRPMIC that it will construct a significant fencing project.

We believe this will have an impact on the cultural resources in the area and we have formally requested the USFS to complete the necessary environmental activities so that an appropriation evaluation can be made to the impact on any cultural resources. USFS leadership can and should do more to protect these resources, but as yet they have not indicated that they will conduct any formal review of the property. Without the assurances that cultural artifacts will be protected, the Community will likely formally oppose this project. We ask the Committee to work with the Forest Service to help educate them about how to respectfully engage tribes in matters like this, so that needed projects do not unnecessarily destroy tribal artifacts.

Chairman McCollum and Ranking Member Joyce thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to the Committee. As you prepare to write the Fiscal Year 2021 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies appropriations bill, I hope you will consider the contents of this request. I look forward to working with both of you to ensure that our Community, and Indian Country as a whole, can thrive in years to come.