



**Chair Chellie Pingree**  
**Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies**  
**FY2023 Regional Tribal Organizations Public Witness Day Hearing**  
**April 6, 2022**

*\*As Prepared\**

Good morning, and welcome to the second public witness hearing on tribal programs under the jurisdiction of the Interior and Environment Appropriations subcommittee.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, we are still not back to normal for public witness hearings. However, this year we are having two hearings.

Yesterday, we heard about national Indian Country priorities to inform the fiscal year 2023 annual appropriation. Today, we will focus on regional Indian country priorities.

As in 2022, we also solicited written testimony from individual Tribes to focus on specific Tribal priorities. That testimony was received last month.

A lot has happened since we last met. Indian Country is struggling with the effects of the pandemic that resulted in the loss of lives, including many Tribal elders and fluent native language speakers, shut down Tribal governments, and shuttered schools. The pandemic's mental health impacts on Native Americans are devastating and will need long-term assistance to address.

I am grateful that President Biden is honoring the Nation's treaty and trust responsibilities to address these issues.

I also look forward to his focus on the climate change crisis and the need to transition to clean energy that is impacting not only the Nation but the world. Like the pandemic, Native America is on the front lines of the climate change crisis and has an important role to play in leading the way to a cleaner, healthier future.

For fiscal year 2023, President Biden proposes \$2.8 billion for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, \$583 million above the fiscal year 2022 enacted level. This includes much-needed increases of an additional \$38 million for public safety and justice programs and construction projects plus an additional \$104 million for natural resources management to continue investments to address climate change and pivot to cleaner energy.

Further, the budget proposes to reclassify contract support costs and payments for Tribal leases as mandatory.

For the Bureau of Indian Education, the President requests \$4.5 billion, which is \$294 million above the fiscal year 2022 enacted level.

The President proposes to make a substantial investment in education construction, with a requested increase of \$156 million. I recently met with leaders from the National Indian Education Association where we discussed the need for additional infrastructure investment. This requested increase is much needed.

For the Indian Health Service, the President proposes to reclassify the entire budget as mandatory. This proposal is not within the Subcommittee's jurisdiction. Since no discretionary funds were requested, I look forward to today's testimony on priority areas in the event Congress has not reclassified the Service's accounts before we pass the annual discretionary appropriation bill.

I am pleased to welcome Tribal organizations to discuss regional needs and challenges facing Indian Country. I am eager to learn more about your issues and priorities, and I look forward to our discussions on these issues because I believe it will help to inform us as we begin to develop the 2023 appropriations bill.

Each witness's full written statement will be introduced into the record, so do please do not feel pressured to cover everything orally.

After we hear the testimony of each witness on the panel, members will have an opportunity to ask questions.

And with that, I am happy to yield to my friend, Mr. Joyce, for his remarks.