



**Testimony of Steve De Los Angeles  
Vice-Chairman, Snoqualmie Indian Tribe  
to the Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,  
and Related Agencies of the United States House of Representatives  
American Indian and Alaska Native Public Witness Day  
February 26, 2025**

Chairman Simpson, Ranking Member Pingree, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am a long-standing Councilmember, currently serving my 4<sup>th</sup> term on the Snoqualmie Indian Tribe's ("Snoqualmie") Tribal Council and am currently the Vice-Chairman of the Tribe. It is an honor to speak before you on behalf of my people and share the pressing issues impacting my Tribe. I begin today by addressing Snoqualmie Indian Tribe's ongoing efforts to restore, protect, and celebrate sacred Snoqualmie Falls.

**The Sacred Snoqualmie Falls (ṣəqɑʔtɔdɑʔ & sqʷəd)**

The Falls, the surrounding lands and waters, are sacred to the Snoqualmie people. Honoring this significance to my people, Snoqualmie Falls is listed as a Traditional Cultural Property on the National Register of Historic Places.

Snoqualmie Falls is a majestic 268-foot waterfall located in the heart of Western Washington State on the Snoqualmie River within my Tribe's historical homeland. More than a natural landmark; it is the heart of our cultural and spiritual identity. In our creation history the mists from the Falls connect worlds. Prayers are offered; blessings are delivered. Ages-old ceremonial practices occur at sacred Snoqualmie Falls to this day.

Today, Snoqualmie Falls continues to be desecrated by Puget Sound Energy's ("PSE") hydroelectric plant in operation since 1898. PSE continues to control the river flow by diverting the water. This interrupts the sacred cycle of the water completing its journey over the Falls to the plunge pool where it transforms to sacred mist. This desecration blocks the creation of the mist that carries our prayers to the Creator. Further impacts to this sacred site are the low-flying helicopter tours which disturb the sanctity of the site, endanger the safety of the estimated two million visitors to the Falls annually, and interfere with our cultural and religious practices.

For years, we have diligently worked with the federal government to ensure trust responsibilities are upheld and to mitigate these grave harms. We encourage every member of this Subcommittee to visit sacred Snoqualmie Falls to be uplifted and to experience its majesty and understand the gravity of what the Snoqualmie Tribe is fighting to protect.



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## **Executive Order Freezing IRA and BIL Funding and Office of Management and Budget Funding Freeze**

On January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025, the administration issued an Executive Order titled "Unleashing American Energy," which paused disbursements for programs under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law ("BIL") and the Inflation Reduction Act ("IRA"). These freezes have had significant and detrimental effects on the Snoqualmie Tribe, particularly for two critical grants:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Climate Pollution Reduction Grant – The Tribe received an award under this program to address climate change, but we are unable to access these funds.
- Snoqualmie Tribe Ancestral Forest Carbon Reduction and Climate Resilient Forestry Project – The Tribe was awarded \$2.9 million to reduce forest fire risks, improve forestry management, and reforest approximately 1,800 acres within our ancestral forest with native species.

Additionally, on January 27, 2025, the Office of Management and Budget ("OMB") issued memorandum M-25-13, which temporarily paused most federal financial assistance programs, including those critical to the Snoqualmie Tribe. While this memo was rescinded two days later, significant portions of funding remain frozen. There are also reports of potential permanent suspensions or terminations of impacted programs.

***It is unacceptable for any administration to freeze funding that Congress has already appropriated for Tribes. Such actions undermine the federal government's trust responsibility to Tribal Nations, disrupt vital programs, and jeopardize our ability to address pressing issues like public safety, health, climate change, and cultural preservation. We respectfully request that this Subcommittee collaborate with the Administration to ensure that these funds are unfrozen and that Tribes, including the Snoqualmie, can access the resources Congress has allocated for these essential projects.***

Tribes ceded over 2 billion acres to ensure tribal members, who are Americans too, are provided healthcare, education, and the ability to practice our culture and traditions. This means continuing to fully fund Indian Health Services ("IHS") and preserving the 100% federal medication assistance percentage in place since 1976. For Snoqualmie, this means the ability to hunt, fish, and gather in our usual and accustomed territory. Environmental Justice plays no part in ensuring salmon, trout, deer, and elk remain plentiful enough to support our tribes, who are already subject to disproportionate rates of food insecurity. Clean water and air are critical to sustaining life, feeding America, and promoting healthier citizens for generations to come.

When considering budget choices, it's imperative that both parties uphold their federal trust responsibility and respect the government-to-government relationship the United States has with tribes. This means continuing progress to fully fund IHS, which is non-discretionary. This means enabling tax parity and clarity for tribal communities by extending tax credits and tax-free bonds to create jobs and improve community infrastructure. None of this work falls under concerns related to DEI.



## **Conclusion**

In closing, I want to thank you once again for allowing me to testify today. The issues I have outlined are of critical importance to the Snoqualmie Indian Tribe and to Tribes across the nation. We formally request that the Subcommittee fund the priorities outlined in this testimony and work with the Administration to ensure that Tribes can fully utilize all funding appropriated by Congress. I'm happy to answer any questions the Subcommittee members may have.