



HOOPA VALLEY TRIBAL COUNCIL

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Chairman Joe Davis

**Written Testimony of Joe Davis, Chairman
Hoopa Valley Tribe
Submitted to the House Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
On the Fiscal Year FY 2027 Budgets for the
Bureau of Indian Affairs, Indian Health Service and Related
Agencies March 11, 2026**

On behalf of the Hoopa Valley Tribal Council and our citizens, it is an honor to provide our funding priorities and recommendations for the FY2027 Budgets for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Indian Health Service (IHS), and Related agencies. First, ***we strongly urge this Committee to protect the Federal trust and treaty obligations as you consider Tribal program funding for FY 2027.*** While the United States has yet to fully live up to the promises it has made to Tribal nations, the Hoopa Valley Tribe ("Tribe") continues to pursue our goals in building a strong and prosperous economy and providing necessary public services to our citizens. Second, the Tribe is one of the initial Tribes to enter into a Compact of Self-Governance with the United States in both the Departments of the Interior and Health and Human Services. We have had remarkable success in implementing Tribal Self-Governance, but we are still woefully underfunded in many of our critical programs, services, functions and activities. The following summarizes our priority funding requests and justifications.

I. Hoopa Valley Tribe Specific Requests

1. \$2M Increase – Law Enforcement – Special Agents in Charge – BIA
2. \$83.4M - Johnson O'Malley Cost Adjustments - BIE
3. \$1.04M – Hoopa Office of Emergency Services (OES) – BIA
4. \$3.3M – Social Services/Indian Child Welfare Act – BIA
5. \$19.7M – Forestry, Fuels, and Roads – BIA
6. \$1.25M Increase – Wildland Fire – BIA
7. \$750,000 Increase – Fisheries – BOR and Related Agencies
8. \$150,000 – Irrigation – BIA
9. \$900,000 Annual Allocation – Hoopa Valley Public Utility District (Operation/Maintenance) – IHS
10. \$3.6M Increase – Clinic Staffing, Recruitment & Retention (Human Resources) – IHS
11. \$760,000 – Emergency Medical Services (Ambulance) – IHS

II. Background on the Hoopa Valley Tribe

The Tribe is located in northwest California along the Trinity River, approximately 59 miles east of Eureka and 272 miles north of Sacramento. The Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation (Reservation) is approximately 90,000 acres of forest and mountain land ranging in elevation from 320 to 5,000 feet.

III. Hoopa Valley Tribe Specific Requests/Justifications

1. \$2M Increase – Law Enforcement – Officers and Special Agents in Charge (SACs) –BIA

Since 2016, the Department of Justice has exercised concurrent Federal criminal jurisdiction over the Indian Country of the Tribe. The Hoopa Valley Tribal Police Department (HVTPD) currently has a Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of California, the District Attorney for Humboldt County, and the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office. These memoranda authorize HVTPD to enforce Tribal, State, and Federal laws within the Hoopa Valley Reservation's concurrent jurisdiction. The Justice Department has proposed several statutory amendments that would assist tribes. We support expanded authority and funding for entry of domestic violence protection orders, and amended tribal background check authorities, among others.

The HVTPD currently operates with seven full-time sworn officers and four dispatchers. Of these seven officers, four are assigned to patrol and three to administrative duties, providing 24-hour coverage for the Hoopa Valley Reservation. The 2015 BIA Corrective Action Support Team (C.A.S.T.) report determined that this staffing level is insufficient to ensure effective law enforcement. HVTPD has experienced significant challenges recruiting and retaining officers due to wages that are non-competitive with neighboring agencies. Current BIA funding is inadequate, requiring the HVTPD to rely on short-term external funding that does not support long-term staffing goals. According to the C.A.S.T. report, the department needs 15 officers for full operational effectiveness. The 2015 C.A.S.T. report estimated that an annual budget of \$1,936,000 is necessary for a full-scale law enforcement program with five dispatchers and 15 officers. In 2026, this amount would only cover the salaries of the current staff. To address the ongoing staffing and funding shortfall, the Tribe is formally requesting an increase in funding for BIA Law Enforcement.

2. \$83.4M - Johnson O'Malley Cost Adjustments Following Updated Student Counts from 25 U.S.C. 5301 - BIE

The Hoopa Valley Tribe respectfully urges an increase in the budget request for the Johnson O'Malley Program (JOM) to reflect updated student counts following the Johnson O'Malley Supplemental Indian Education Program Modernization Act of 2018 (25 U.S.C. 5301). The JOM program has not been fully funded since the early 1970s; while average funding was \$2,461 per pupil in 1972, it fell to just \$64 per pupil in FY 2024. With the newly updated official student count of 317,102 for School Year 2025–2026, many JOM contractors risk receiving less funding than in prior years because appropriations have continued to rely on outdated enrollment figures. To restore funding to an inflation-adjusted level for the current student count would require approximately \$83.4 million, an increase of \$62.9 million above FY 2025. Without this investment, JOM programs will face significant challenges in delivering critical academic support, Native language revitalization, and cultural education programs to Tribal students. The Tribe therefore urges Congress to increase the budget request and support higher appropriations in FY 2027.

3. \$1.04M – Hoopa Office of Emergency Services (OES) – BIA

OES is a Tribal emergency management program that develops and implements emergency management programs for the Tribe. OES is responsible for coordinating emergency management activities, including planning, training, and response operations, and for working with Tribal, state, and federal partners to ensure effective emergency response and recovery. OES serves all community members, both Tribal members and non-Tribal members. The program plays a vital role in the safety and well-being of the community. Unlike state and local county emergency management programs, Tribal emergency management programs do not have annual funding or compact agreements. Emergency management and response is challenging due to the remote and rugged terrain. Therefore, the requested funding will assist with operations, will enable OES to control the emergency management resources available to the Tribe, and better meet the needs of the Tribal community in emergencies.

4. \$3.3M – Social Services/Indian Child Welfare Act – BIA

The Tribe receives inadequate funding to properly administer services to our abused and neglected elders, dependent adults and children. These disparities include inadequate funding for Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) cases. The Tribe has the second largest ICWA caseload in the State of California. There is no funding for ICWA attorneys and only enough funds for one ICWA social worker (whereas our caseload dictates the need for 3 to 5 case managers). Further, there is no funding support for our at-risk youth. The requested funding will be used to address these shortfalls including prevention activities to address drug, alcohol, violence and abuse.

5. \$1.97M – Hoopa Forests, Fuels, and Roads – BIA

Federal agencies have mismanaged Hoopa Indian trust timberland and roads leaving more than 22,000 of 90,000 acres insufficiently stocked with commercial conifer trees. Nearly a century of federal fire exclusion policies resulted in areas choked with dense valueless hardwood trees and brush creating an extreme fire hazard. Looming wildfire threatens the lives, health, and homes of thousands of Hoopa tribe members and valuable Indian trust timber assets, as well as neighboring federal forest. More than half of Hoopa's 700 miles of forest roads are severely deteriorated and hamper emergency access during emergency wildfire suppression. We request \$1,800,000 annually to plan timber harvest, forest stand thinning, and fire hazard reduction projects; and \$5,200,000, annually to implement those projects. We request \$2,100,000, annually to maintain critical roads. Forest biomass available from both our Indian trust land coupled with biomass available from nearby US Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) forests is likely sufficient to support a wood biomass energy plant in Hoopa. Recent forest stewardship authorities and long-term agreements with the USFS and BLM can facilitate similar forest health improvements while contributing to a stable woody biomass supply. We request \$8,500,000 to confirm feasibility, plan, and construct a biomass energy plant; and \$2,100,000 to configure an existing lumber mill to store residue.

6. \$1.25M Base Funding Increase – Wildland Fire – BIA

The Hoopa Valley Tribe Self-Governance base amount for Wildland Fire preparedness has not increased for 24 years. The Hoopa Valley Tribe is one of two Tribes within the Pacific Region that took advantage of the 1999 opportunity to dedicate their staff and resources to complete the only approved Fire Management Planning Analysis (FMP). In the face of a very real and probable risk of catastrophic wildland fire, there is a life and death need for the Tribe to have a base funding increase of \$1.25 million for wildland fire preparedness. Timely reimbursements are critically needed. The delay is resulting in detrimental and negative impacts.

7. \$750,000 Increase – Fisheries – BOR and Related Agencies

The Fisheries Department (Fisheries) is charged with the health and safety of the Trinity River, the fish, and water quality. Fisheries emphasizes the United States trust responsibility in defending and protecting the Trinity River, which holds cultural, historical, and sacred significance to our people. Fisheries requires funding to assist with the hiring and retention of specialized personnel; equipment; operational, maintenance, and legal expenses; and the renovation of a conservation hatchery project.

8. \$150,000 – Irrigation – BIA

The Hoopa Valley Public Utilities District (HVPUD), a chartered entity of the Tribe, is responsible for maintaining and managing the irrigation system within the Reservation. Under the Self-Governance Compact and Funding Agreement with the BIA, HVPUD receives an annual allocation of \$47,416 to operate and manage the entire irrigation infrastructure serving the Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation. This funding level has remained unchanged since the early 1990s. Portions of the antiquated infrastructure, more than

100 years old, significantly increase maintenance complexity and costs. An increase to the annual irrigation allocation within the BIA Self-Governance Funding Agreement is critically needed. Adequate funding is essential for HVPUD to effectively operate and maintain this system, which plays a vital role in advancing tribal food sovereignty, community health, and long-term tribal self-sustainability. Without increased support, it will become increasingly difficult for HVPUD to continue providing reliable irrigation services to our tribal people.

9. \$900,000 Annual Allocation – Hoopa Valley Public Utility District (Operation/Maintenance) – IHS

HVPUD provides health and safety services, including drinking water, fire flow capacity for emergency response, and sanitation facilities such as water and septic installation. Our distribution system includes two water treatment facilities, 20 water storage tanks, 14 pumping facilities and hundreds of miles of waterlines. HVPUD lacks the financial resources required to adequately meet its operational demands.

The Indian Health Service—has a trust responsibility to support the health of Tribal communities. Access to safe drinking water is foundational to public health. Without adequate operations and maintenance funding, Tribal water systems are at significant risk. Many of our residents rely on in-home medical care, and clean, reliable water is essential to support services such as home dialysis treatments, wound care, infection control, bathing, and disease prevention.

We respectfully urge Congress to recognize the operational realities faced by Tribal utilities and to appropriate dedicated funding to support the operations and maintenance of Tribal public water systems. Such investment is not simply an infrastructure expense—it is a life-saving public health commitment that upholds the federal government’s trust and treaty responsibilities to Tribal Nations. Reliable federal appropriations for operations and maintenance will ensure that the Hoopa Valley Public Utilities District can continue providing safe drinking water and protecting the health and safety of our Tribal membership for generations to come.

10. \$3.6M Increase– Clinic Staffing, Recruitment & Retention (Human Resource) – IHS

K’ima:w Medical Center (KMC) is a rural ambulatory clinic and entity of the Tribe. The cost of locums to fill critical positions has grown exorbitantly. At the height of the COVID- 19 pandemic, KMC had over 30 vacancies. In FY2022 alone, KMC had to utilize 27 different locum providers. Clinical staff, both nurses and providers, are currently majority locums/travelers. This is a barrier for continuity of care and an increased burden on staff who are recruiting, training, and orienting new staff members every few months. While third-party revenue and grants help cover some operating costs, the resources put into recruitment and retention are increasing exponentially, and sadly, we are not achieving the goal of full permanent staffing. KMC remains at a disadvantage when competing with appropriately funded urban organizations. Further, IHS has delayed repayment to tribes of contract support costs on third-party billings. These funds too must be paid promptly.

11. \$760,000 – Emergency Medical Services (Ambulance) – IHS

Given the transportation challenges of our rural residents, coupled with not having emergency care at our local health facility, ambulance services are critical for mitigating harm and saving lives. Private ambulance services do not cover rural areas because they are not lucrative. In 2025, KMC Ambulance responded to over 1,000 calls. We rely on unstable funding to subsidize our ambulance department, such as Measure Z/O. KMC does not receive the needed HIS funding to support these operational costs.

- IV. I appreciate the opportunity to provide our **FY2027 BIA, IHS, and related agency budget priorities** of the Hoopa Valley Tribe and respectfully urge your support of these requests.