



The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation



Prepared Statement of the Honorable Jarred-Michael Erickson, Chairman
Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation

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

American Indian and Alaska Native Public Witness Days

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On behalf of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (the “Colville Tribes” or the “CCT”), I thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on the Subcommittee’s FY 2027 spending bill. The Colville Tribes appreciates the Subcommittee’s efforts in drafting and securing passage its FY 2026 bill to protect Indian programs from significant reductions.

The CCT has three recommendations for the Subcommittee’s consideration for the FY 2027 bill:

- (1) Public Safety and Justice: The Colville Tribes has a fraction of the number of officers it needs to patrol its 1.4-million-acre (2,200 square mile) reservation and, like most other tribes, supplements the amount it receives for law enforcement with tribal dollars by multitudes. The CCT urges the Committee to provide a significant increase to the applicable accounts for law enforcement officer salaries to enable tribes nationwide to hire more officers and to retain the officers that they currently have.
- (2) Include Report Language Directing the Indian Health Service (IHS) to Explore Making Joint Venture facilities eligible for section 105(l) Leases: There is no reason to exclude tribal health facilities constructed under IHS’s Joint Venture facility construction program from eligibility for reimbursement under the section 105(l) lease program and CCT requests report language directing IHS to explore making these projects eligible.
- (3) Support the Intertribal Timber Council’s request that the Committee set aside \$20 million to be distributed by the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to agencies on a competitive basis on their assessment of where timber sales can be generated the fastest,

BACKGROUND ON THE COLVILLE TRIBES

By way of background, although now considered a single Indian tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation is a confederation of twelve aboriginal tribes and bands from across eastern Washington state, northeastern Oregon, Idaho, and British Columbia. The present-

day Colville Reservation is in north-central Washington state and was established by Executive Order in 1872. The Colville Reservation covers almost 1.4 million acres and its boundaries include portions of both Okanogan and Ferry counties. Geographically, the Colville Reservation is larger than the state of Delaware and is the largest Indian reservation in the Pacific Northwest.

The Colville Reservation and the CCT's trust lands encompass three congressional districts in Washington state: the Fourth (Rep. Dan Newhouse), Fifth (Rep. Michael Baumgartner), and the Eighth (Rep. Kim Schrier).

I. INCREASE FUNDING FOR BIA LAW ENFORCEMENT

There is a constant need for additional funding for tribal law enforcement and detention operations. The CCT requests that the Committee provide a \$100 million increase for the Criminal Investigations and Police Services account to enable tribes in all BIA regions to hire more police officers and to retain their existing police officers.

As the Committee is aware, large land-based tribes often lack enough tribal police officers. This often results in police response times more than four hours. There are occasions when the Colville Tribes has only a single officer on duty for the entire 1.4-million-acre Colville Reservation.

Nationwide, BIA law enforcement is funded at only a fraction of the actual need. Recruitment and retention remain acute issues even with the Colville Tribes supplementing the BIA funding allocation by more than 300 percent annually. Most other Indian tribes that the Colville Tribes is familiar with similarly supplement the amounts they receive from the BIA for law enforcement.

Colville understands and appreciates the need for increased law enforcement personnel in the aftermath of the Supreme Court's decision in McGirt v. Oklahoma, 591 U.S. 894 (2020). We are concerned, however, that increases that go solely to Oklahoma will result in funding levels to Indian tribes outside of Oklahoma withering and remaining flat. Going forward, if the Committee intends to continue funneling large increases to Oklahoma, it must also provide commensurate increases to the rest of Indian country.

II. INCLUDE REPORT LANGUAGE THAT DIRECTS IHS TO EXPLORE MAKING JOINT VENTURE HEALTH FACILITIES ELIGIBLE FOR 105(I) LEASES

In 2020, the Colville Tribes was one of five Indian tribes nationally to successfully compete for the Joint Venture Facility Construction Program (JV), which the Indian Health Service (IHS) offers once every six or seven years. The Colville Tribes had unsuccessfully applied for the JV program in 2007 and 2014, demonstrating how competitive it is. Under the JV program, an Indian tribe pays to build and equip a new health facility and the IHS provides 80 percent of the recurring staffing costs for the facility for at least 20 years. When the Colville Tribes applied for the JV project in 2018 and 2019, most of the northwest congressional

delegation signed onto two separate letters of support for the Colville Tribes' application to IHS. The Colville Tribes' JV project is for a new clinic in Omak, WA. Construction of the Omak clinic is now complete, and the Colville Tribes will begin occupying it in the coming weeks.

Section 105(l) of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA) requires IHS to pay Indian tribes fair market rental when tribes carry out ISDEAA functions at a tribally owned facility. Congress appropriates payments for section 105(l) leases through an indefinite appropriations account in the Interior spending bill.

Even though Indian tribes construct and own the facilities in JV projects, JV projects—like the Omak clinic—are ineligible for reimbursement under section 105(l). The Facilities Appropriations Advisory Board, an advisory committee to IHS on facility issues, has twice recommended that the IHS takes steps to make JV facilities eligible for 105(l) leases, most recently in a December 3, 2025, letter to IHS.

Congress authorized the JV program in 1992, long before modern utilization of the section 105(l) program, and there is no longer a legitimate reason to exclude JV facilities from the 105(l) program. For this reason, the Colville Tribes recommends the following report language for inclusion in the “Indian Health Facilities” section of the report that will accompany the Committee’s bill:

The Committee is aware that health facilities constructed under the Service’s Joint Venture Construction Program are currently ineligible for section 105(l) lease reimbursement. The authorization for the Joint Venture program is more than 30 years old and pre-dates the modern utilization of the 105(l) program. The Committee directs the Service, in consultation with Indian tribes with Joint Venture facilities, explore options to enable to Joint Venture project to utilize the 105(l) program and report back to the Committee within 270 days.

III. TIMBER PILOT PRODUCTION PROGRAM

The President’s March 1, 2025, Executive Order on increasing timber production from federal lands represents a critical opportunity to address the inequities between the per acre funding for tribal trust forests and other federal land management agencies while advancing national goals for forest health and reduced wildfire risk. Consistent with this Executive Order, the Colville Tribes joins the Intertribal Timber Council’s request that the Committee set aside \$20 million in its bill to be distributed by the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to agencies on a competitive basis on their assessment of where timber sales can be generated the fastest, at the lowest cost to the federal government, and best utilized by the forest products manufacturing sector. The Colville Tribes also joins in the Council’s request for the inclusion of report language that requires both Departments to report to Congress on per-acre spending and timber production efficiency across federal forest agencies, using models from the IFMAT report.