

**United States House of Representatives
Select Committee on the Climate Crisis**

**Hearing on November 18, 2021
“Tribal Voices, Tribal Wisdom: Strategies for the Climate Crisis”**

Questions for the Record

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The Honorable Kathy Castor

- 1. Ms. Thomas, can you describe some of the ways the Biden Administration is working to improve Tribal consultation and strengthen relationships with Tribal Nations?**

On January 26, 2021, President Biden issued a Presidential Memorandum on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation to Nation Relationships.¹ The Presidential Memorandum requires the federal agencies (but not the independent agencies) to revisit, review and revise their tribal consultation policies, and to provide regular reporting to the Office of Management and Budget on tribal consultation policies and efforts. In response to this Memorandum, the federal agencies engaged tribes through consultation to provide input and feedback on current federal tribal consultation policies, including, for the first time the Office of Management and Budget.²

In addition, as announced at the White House Tribal Nations Conference, several executive agency initiatives to promote consultation and nation to nation relationships include the Joint Secretarial Order with the USDA and DOI regarding tribal participation in federal land management decisions³ and an Memorandum of Understanding between multiple federal agencies related to protection of treaty rights and sacred sites.⁴

Several federal agencies, including Interior, EPA and USDA, have initiated consultation on major agency actions - such as EPA's review of regulations related to the Clean Water Act and Clean Air Act; Interior's implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act; and USDA tribal food sovereignty and related initiatives. These efforts are re-invigorating the

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/26/memorandum-on-tribal-consultation-and-strengthening-nation-to-nation-relationships/>

² <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/tribal-consultation/>

³ <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/elips/documents/so-3403-joint-secretarial-order-on-fulfilling-the-trust-responsibility-to-indian-tribes-in-the-stewardship-of-federal-lands-and-waters.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/mou-interagency-coordination-and-collaboration-for-the-protection-of-indigenous-sacred-sites-11-16-2021.pdf>

federal-tribal relationship and promoting more involvement and collaboration in implementing federal programs. However, there are still some major gaps in consultation efforts, especially for the Bi-partisan Infrastructure Bill, including lack of consultation sessions scheduled for Department of Energy and Department of Transportation.

2. Ms. Thomas, do you believe that technologies like grid-scale storage and demand response can help achieve a more flexible grid that can integrate higher levels of renewable energy as we phase out unabated fossil fuel-fired electricity generation?

While this is a highly technical technology issue, grid operators are developing the tools and technologies to address this aspect of grid management. Grid-scale storage and demand response will only go so far though. Demand response is especially challenging given the very diffuse use of power - it is almost irrelevant, for example, in the residential sector.⁵ It is also more challenging as more distributed energy resources are deployed through community scale projects, rooftop solar, and other distribution system level energy generation systems such as microgrids.⁶

Furthermore, while demand response is helpful for addressing peak demand issues, it is not typically used for firming or dispatching power. In that regard, other clean energy technologies that generate firm and/or dispatchable power can also provide grid services to create flexibility and integration support - such as geothermal, waste-to-energy, and other renewable fuels (like landfill gas).

3. Ms. Thomas, should Congress explore strategies to reduce the carbon footprint of the manufacturing of climate solutions like wind and solar energy while supporting the transition to a clean energy economy?

I'm not entirely clear on the question. I interpret it to mean are there strategies or mechanisms related to the reduction of the carbon footprint of the manufacturing of wind turbines or solar panels. If this is the correct interpretation, then my response is - Yes, Congress should explore such strategies. For example, President Biden and members of Congress have promoted the "on-shoring" of the clean energy supply chain. This supply chain includes mining, manufacturing, and assembling the materials needed for clean energy projects (batteries, solar panels, wind turbines). While this discussion has occurred in the context of creating new jobs in the U.S., moving manufacturing and assembly closer to the location of projects will necessarily reduce the carbon footprint - through reduced transportation carbon emissions. One such strategy might be to provide additional federal incentives to manufacturers that locate on Indian lands - since those lands are likely to be closer to large utility scale solar and wind projects.

⁵ Although technology improvements, such as smart meters, programmable thermostats and appliances that can communicate with the utility, are creating increasing opportunities for utility residential demand side management programs. <https://www.utilitydive.com/news/welcoming-the-next-generation-residential-demand-response-30/551947/>

⁶ <https://www.woodmac.com/news/opinion/time-resi-demand-response-shine-summer-2020/>