



## **COW CREEK BAND OF UMPQUA TRIBE OF INDIANS GOVERNMENT OFFICES**

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As we reflect on the 50-year legacy of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA), it is clear that tribal self-governance has transformed service delivery across Indian Country. The flexibility provided by 638 contracts and compacts has enabled Tribes to deliver culturally competent, locally managed programs that better serve Tribal citizens while promoting economic development, health care access, and tribal sovereignty.

While this hearing rightly commemorates the achievements of ISDEAA, it must also serve as a bipartisan call to action: to expand the principles of tribal self-governance to a broader range of federal programs and agencies beyond the Department of the Interior and Indian Health Service. Tribes have repeatedly demonstrated the capacity, innovation, and commitment necessary to assume greater control over programs that directly affect their communities.

Legislative tools such as the Helping Expedite and Advance Responsible Tribal Homeownership (HEARTH) Act and the Indian Trust Asset Reform Act (ITARA) have shown that when Congress provides Tribes with the authority to manage their own lands and resources, and Tribal assets, the results are efficient, accountable, and aligned with local priorities. These Acts are prime examples of how federal policy can honor the trust relationship while removing bureaucratic barriers to tribal self-determination.

To that end, we urge this Committee to support bipartisan initiatives that:

- Expand self-governance authorities to federal agencies such as the Departments of Agriculture, Education, Energy, Transportation, and Commerce;
- Promote broader use of compacting and contracting mechanisms modeled after 638 authority, without
- Incentivize inter-agency collaboration to streamline funding and oversight across programs administered by Tribes;
- Expedite the delivery of federal funding to Tribal governments, recognizing that delayed or inconsistent funding disrupts program delivery and hinders long-term planning. The Cow Creek are currently still waiting for 2024 & 2025 BIA TPA Forestry funding.
- Reevaluate tribal funding formulas and allocations to ensure they reflect the true needs, growth, and responsibilities of each Tribal Nation not outdated baselines;

- Continue to monitor and improve implementation of the Practical Reforms and Other Goals to Reinforce the Effectiveness of Self-Governance and Self-Determination for Indian Tribes Act ( PROGRESS Act) and ensure its intent is fulfilled with clarity and efficiency;
- Explore cooperative audit resolutions and other tools that build capacity and reduce barriers to tribal program administration;
- Index funding levels to inflation, acreage and population growth to avoid budget shortfalls;
- Shift from discretionary funding to mandatory funding for programs operated under ISDEAA, ensuring tribes have stable, long-term resources to meet their growing needs;
- Establish a mechanism for protecting federal funding that has been obligated to Tribes, against federal budget cuts and shutdowns;
- Promote education and awareness within federal agencies regarding the self-governance process to foster respect for tribal decision-making and minimize the risk of federal overreach in the implementation of self-governance agreements;
- Shift from discretionary funding to mandatory funding for programs operated under ISDEAA, ensuring tribes have stable, long-term resources; and,
- Develop demonstration projects that could serve as models for permanent programs, enabling tribes to exercise self-determination, co-management, and stewardship over ancestral lands, including federal lands, regardless of whether those lands fall within current reservation boundaries.

Expanding tribal self-governance is not only a matter of policy, it is a matter of principle. It honors tribal sovereignty, strengthens government-to-government relationships, and advances the long-term well-being of tribal nations and surrounding communities. Now is the time to move forward together.



Carla Keene, Chairman  
Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians