

Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
Oversight Hearing
1334 Longworth House Office Building
February 12, 2025
2:00 PM

Oversight Hearing titled *“Leaving Indian Children Behind: Reviewing the State of BIE Schools”*

Questions from Rep. Gosar for Ms. Kathleen Sedney, Assistant Inspector General for Audits, Inspections, and Evaluations, Office of Inspector General.

1. Last Congress, this Subcommittee initiated a joint investigation with the Committee on Education and the Workforce, looking into the educational experience at Haskell Indian Nations University. Unfortunately, I have continued to hear reports from campus of alleged misconduct, retaliation, and deteriorating facilities. What can you share with the Committee on progress made since our last hearing in OIG investigations related to Haskell? What is OIG currently working on in this space?

Response: In a hearing last Congress, we confirmed that we have an ongoing review related to sexual assault and sexual harassment policies at Haskell Indian Nations University (HINU) and Southwestern Polytechnic Institute (SIPI). We have completed fieldwork for this review and are in the process of drafting the associated report. With regard to investigations related to HINU, however, to protect the integrity of our oversight work, the OIG does not confirm or deny ongoing investigations.

2. Due to the history of complaints received by OIG related to the mishandling of sexual assaults, in 2022 OIG initiated a review to determine whether BIE-operated postsecondary institutions were following laws and policies related to complaints of sexual harassment and misconduct, with a focus on the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute and Haskell. I appreciate OIG’s attention to this important matter. However, we are now in 2025, and students are vulnerable at Haskell - when can the Committee expect to review the sexual assault policy review, initiated in 2022 by OIG?

Response: As noted previously, we have completed the fieldwork for this review and are far along in the process of drafting a report documenting the findings. We had in fact initiated the process of report writing soon after the joint subcommittee hearing last year, but, in doing so, we determined that additional fieldwork was necessary to fully address the issues we had identified. This is not uncommon, particularly in complex reviews of this nature, but we are mindful of the

importance of completing this work and intend to do so expeditiously.

3. How much of the funding allocated for deferred maintenance has gone unspent or been redirected, and why?

Response: The OIG's work addressing deferred maintenance in this context did not assess unspent or redirected deferred maintenance funding, and we accordingly do not have the information needed to respond to this question. The Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), however, may be in a position to provide this information.

4. What percentage of the \$95 million annual allocation from the Great American Outdoors Act has actually been spent on priority maintenance projects?

Response: As noted, Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF) funding is specifically targeted towards deferred maintenance and repair needs. Although the OIG has not specifically reviewed BIE's expenditures of GAOA LRF monies, in our 2024 report,¹ we found that Indian Affairs (IA) was unable to effectively manage its deferred maintenance due to funding delays, processing work orders based on a monetary threshold, limited project management capacity, and unreliable work order data. Without reliable work order data, BIE may not allocate funding to priority projects that strategically address its deferred maintenance backlog. The BIE may be able to provide more detailed information on expenditures and the status of GAOA LRF projects.

5. What financial controls are in place to ensure that maintenance funding is used appropriately and does not expire before being utilized?

Response: The OIG has not conducted a review specifically focused on the internal controls related to maintenance funding or its expiration. However, the Indian Affairs Manual (80 IAM Ch. 9) describes the identification and prioritization of Deferred Maintenance requirements for programs. These procedures state that BIE and IA distribute funds based on need. Specifically, the policy states that "each program must work with their sites to stress how critically important it is that all deferred maintenance work orders and abatement plans are current and accurate" in the facility management system. Again, the findings outlined in our 2024 report and FY 2025 inspections have found that information in the facility management system is not accurate.² Additionally, we found in our work that critical health and safety deficiencies were not addressed in a timely manner.³

¹ [Final Evaluation Report – Indian Affairs Is Unable To Effectively Manage Deferred Maintenance of School Facilities, Report No. 2022-CR-036.](#)

² [Final Inspection Report – The Bureau of Indian Education Must Correct Safety and Health Deficiencies and Improve Emergency Preparedness and Security at Havasupai Elementary School, Report No. 2023-ISP-040,](#) [Final Inspection Report – The Bureau of Indian Education Must Correct Safety and Health Deficiencies and Improve Facility Management System Accuracy at Tate Topa Tribal School, Report No. 2024-ISP-014.](#)

³ *Id.*

The IA's Division of Facilities Management and Construction and BIE may be able to provide more detailed information related to specific funding controls.