



*Oversight Hearing titled “Infrastructure in Indigenous Communities:
Priorities for American Jobs Plan.”*

OPENING STATEMENT

Thank you, Madam Chair and thank you to the witnesses for being with us.

With the many technical issues this committee has experienced with virtual hearings this year and given that most of us are now vaccinated, I sincerely hope that Members of this Committee can return to work in person soon.

It is no secret that infrastructure plays an extremely important role in providing basic services to people no matter where they live.

Quality infrastructure boosts economic development, creates jobs, and quality of life increases.

Nowhere is this more important than tribal communities.



There is, however, a great need throughout Indian Country for quality infrastructure, the lack of which creates barriers to economic development, higher quality of life, and human health and safety.

On March 31, 2021, President Biden released his American Jobs Plan.

Unfortunately, the proposed Plan has very little information as to how the infrastructure needs in Indian country that fall under this committee's jurisdiction will be addressed.

Even with a lofty price tag north of 2 trillion dollars, this Plan fails to prioritize some of Indian country's most pressing infrastructure needs.

In 2017, this committee held an oversight hearing examining Indian healthcare facility infrastructure.

Witnesses told the Committee that most Indian healthcare facilities could only handle 52% of the services needed by their communities because of funding shortfalls and—

the average age of I-H-S hospitals is approximately 40 years old, quadruple that of an average hospital in the United States.

With current construction funding provided by Congress, facilities would need to last 400 years before they could be replaced.

Additionally, the President's Plan would invest less than 6 percent on roads and bridges and less than 5 percent on broadband in Indian country – both of which are critical areas of need.

Instead – the Plan prioritizes Green New Deal mandates and new taxpayer funded jobs while attacking American industries that provide millions of jobs for the American people.

The Plan also does not propose any regulatory or programmatic changes that are desperately needed to expedite projects to expand economic development in Indian country, ensure more money goes to where it's needed most, and guarantee that the taxpayers receive the most bang for their buck.

Regulatory or programmatic changes can have a tremendous impact on infrastructure and economic development—and they don't increase the burden on taxpayers.

The United States Congress has had a long history of passing bipartisan infrastructure packages and we all support the premise of investing in our infrastructure to bolster our economy in every sector.

For that reason, I hope the majority keeps this process bipartisan and won't resort to the Budget Reconciliation process again as was done for the American Rescue Plan, where the majority ceded its jurisdiction to the Budget and Rules Committees.

While many infrastructure components of the President's plan fall outside of this committee's jurisdiction, I look forward to robust discussion with our witnesses, to identify how this committee, along with our tribal partners, can put together a commonsense infrastructure package that will work for Indian Country.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

I yield back.