

SCIP Legislative Hearing

H.R. 5549, Indian Health Service Advance Appropriations Act

7.28.22

OPENING STATEMENT

Good afternoon and thank you, Madam Chair.

As you mentioned, the subcommittee will be receiving testimony on H.R. 5549, the Indian Health Service Advance Appropriations Act.

This bill is sponsored by the late Dean of the House, Mr. Don Young from Alaska.

Congress continually struggles to pass appropriations bills in a timely manner. Regular order frequently goes out the window, as omnibus bills barrel through House and the Senate right as the end of the fiscal year approaches. That's if we get an omnibus at all.

Frequently, Congress will choose to enact a continuing resolution that impacts all departments and can minimize what pay authority there is in the future.

Or, even worse, there is no appropriations passed into law and the government is forced to shutdown.

Any of these disruptions can cause uncertainty for Native communities that rely on services and programs managed by the Indian Health Service. If there is a delay in federal funding, Indian Country can be disproportionately impacted and seriously hindered.

H.R. 5549 would authorize advance appropriations for two Indian Health Service budget accounts. The first year this is in place, appropriations would be set aside for two fiscal years, and then appropriations would be authorized one year in advance.

The accounts covered, include: the accounts that provide the basic funding for Indian Health Services and funding for the construction of Indian Health Service facilities.

This will help Indian tribes, Alaska Natives and others properly plan ahead and manage budgets more efficiently. I want to thank our witnesses for being here today and I am looking forward to hearing their testimony.

Thank you, Madam Chair, I yield back.