

Duckwater Shoshone Tribe
Rodney Mike, Tribal Chairman

March 6, 2019

**Testimony submitted to the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees
on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
Regarding FY 2020 Indian Programs Appropriations**

The Duckwater Shoshone Tribe's requests for the FY 2020 Indian Health Service (IHS) and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) appropriations are as follows:

- Assist the Tribe with our reservation expansion plans and self-governance project
- Increase funding for Community and Economic Development in the BIA budget for development of renewable energy, conventional energy, and mineral resources;
- Increase BIA funding for road maintenance;
- Increase funding to the IHS Hospitals and Clinics line item, and direct the IHS to direct additional funding to pharmacy programs and physician services;
- Fund IHS in advance in parity with the Veterans Administration;
- Permanently reauthorize the Special Diabetes Program for Indians;
- Continue to fully fund Contract Support Costs for the IHS and BIA;
- Increase funding for Welfare Assistance in the BIA budget.

Background

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Rodney Mike, Tribal Chairman of the Duckwater Shoshone Tribe. We are a federally recognized Indian Tribe located in a remote, high desert valley in the State of Nevada, in the very northern tip of Nye County. The Tribe is governed by a democratically elected, five-member tribal council and is primarily an agricultural community. We offer a range of services to our tribal members, including health care and natural resources and environmental health programs. The Tribe operates a tribal health clinic under a self-governance agreement with the Indian Health Service under Title V of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act.

Reservation Expansion and Self Governance

Our reservation has recently been expanded by thirty thousand acres. In order to proceed with this project, we have requested the Bureau of Land Management, whose funding falls under the jurisdiction of this Committee, to complete a survey of the land. Despite repeated requests, the Bureau has not completed the survey. Further, for several years, the Tribe has been seeking a self-governance contract with BLM, and the agency has simply refused to respond to our requests for meetings to begin negotiations for our Tribe to assume various BLM duties. We ask for any support in ensuring that BLM promptly responds to requests for engagement on this issue. The DST has submitted a self-governance compact funding proposal to the BLM.

Development of renewable energy, conventional energy, and mineral resources

We ask that this Subcommittee increase funding for the “Community and Economic Development” activity in the BIA budget, particularly the “Job Placement and Training” sub activity, which funds technical and vocational training, and the “Minerals and Mining” sub activity, which promotes and provides technical assistance for the development of renewable energy, conventional energy, and mineral resources. As a rural Tribe, our members have less access to both employment and job creation opportunities than other citizens. We also struggle with high energy prices. These conditions are two factors hampering our ability to thrive as a community and we have been exploring a number of options to alleviate them. We have determined that we have viable wind and solar energy resources that can be developed to provide our Tribe with greater energy certainty, lower energy prices, and economic opportunities for our tribal members. If we in Indian Country are to build a strong economic future for our communities, we must pursue an “all of the above” energy strategy which for us, includes wind and solar.

Road Maintenance

The Tribe requests that Congress substantially increase the critically low funding for BIA road maintenance in FY2020. The FY2019 funding of \$35.8 million doesn’t begin to cover the costs of deferred road maintenance. The Tribe relies on miles of unpaved and unsafe roads to reach the distant communities where Tribe members work, attend school, and visit family. Due to the Tribe’s remote location, this is an urgent issue because the limited access to and from our reservation caused by the unmaintained and unpaved dirt road hampers our economic development and the ability of our members to access essential services, employment, education, and to visit family living off the reservation. As you know, the roads in Indian Country are some of the most dangerous and poorly funded roads in the Nation. We consider road maintenance funding to be a matter of public safety and we respectfully ask the Subcommittee to increase appropriations for this critical budget sub-activity. Further, the Tribe would like to pave the 21 miles of unpaved, dirt road between our reservations in Duckwater, Nevada to the town of Eureka, Nevada in order to make it safe. While we understand that road improvement falls outside of the purview of this Subcommittee, we would appreciate your support in increased Department of Transportation funds for such projects.

Increased IHS Funding For Pharmacy and Physician Services

The funding the Tribe receives through its Hospitals and Clinics funding is simply insufficient to serve the needs of the Tribe's pharmacy patients. The Tribe's pharmacy is currently not operating due to budget constraints, and the Tribe is forced to refer patients to pharmacies in nearby towns. The Tribe previously used its buy back authority to procure pharmacy services from the IHS through McKesson, but that proved prohibitively expensive.

Similarly, the Tribe has a similar concern about the funding made available through the IHS that the Tribe can then allocate to procuring physician services. The Tribe has been experiencing great difficulty over the past several fiscal periods in recruiting and retaining physicians for carrying out its primary health care programs.

There is just not enough funding for the Tribe to provide necessary services and still have adequate funding for pharmaceuticals and to pay physicians to locate to our remote area. Further, our costs required to provide adequate care to our members have risen by \$800,000 that is not covered by our IHS funding agreement, and the Tribe also spends approximately \$250,000 per year to provide health care services to members living off the reservation. We ask for the Subcommittees' support for increasing the IHS appropriation for Hospitals and Clinics funding, and to direct the IHS to allocate additional funding toward pharmacy and physician services.

Advance Appropriations for IHS

We thank Chairman McCollum for introducing, and Rep. David Joyce for co-sponsoring) legislation to provide advance appropriations for IHS and programs in the BIA and BIE. With regard to the IHS programs, they should have parity with the Veterans Administration health accounts, which Congress had funded in advance since FY 2010. Both IHS and the VA provide direct medical care, but they are not treated equally in the funding process. Predictability, continuity, and certainty are essential for providing stable quality health care. When IHS funding is subject to a Continuing Resolution, as it has been over many years, tribal healthcare providers receive only a portion of annual funding at a time, making it particularly difficult to implement long-range planning and to effectively use and leverage limited resources. Having advance notice of funding levels would greatly aid the Tribe in program planning, recruitment and retention of essential healthcare professionals in the same way that the VA is able to conduct such advance planning. The IHS budget should be afforded the same status consideration as VA health programs. Further, IHS appropriations should, like VA funds, be exempt from sequestration, should that occur again in the future.

Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI)

The Tribe, like others throughout Indian Country, continue to support permanent reauthorization and increased funding for the SDPI, which provides crucial support for diabetes prevention and treatment programs. While an SDPI reauthorization bill is not under purview of this Subcommittee, the SDPI and the programs carried out with SDPI funding affect the scope and range of our health care efforts and our IHS programs, which this Subcommittee funds. The Tribe would greatly appreciate any help the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee members can provide with your colleagues on this matter. A permanent reauthorization with mandatory annual

funding of \$200 million would provide stability for our diabetes programs in terms of planning and recruiting and retaining personnel.

Continue Full Funding of Contract Support Costs

The Tribe appreciates the Subcommittees' leadership and commitment to fully funding CSC for IHS and BIA ISDEAA agreements. We appreciate the full funding of CSC over the past few fiscal years, that the funding is indefinite ("such sums as may be necessary", and that the funding is in separate accounts in the IHS and BIA budgets. We request that the Subcommittees continue to fully fund CSC. Such action is crucial to strengthening the ability of tribal governments' to successfully exercise their rights and responsibilities as sovereign nations.

Adult Welfare Assistance

Our tribal members, like other residents of Indian Country and non-tribal rural populations, experience higher than average rates of unemployment than urban populations. As a Tribe, we are working hard to help create opportunities for our Members both in terms of job placement and job creation. Unfortunately, there are some circumstance when welfare assistance is temporarily needed for some tribal members. The "Welfare Assistance" sub-activity funded under the "Human Services" activity in the BIA budget provides these critical resources for our people. We, like the BIA and Congress, believe that welfare assistance should be a temporary safety net and ultimately, a bridge to better circumstances and opportunities, but we believe that it must exist. We ask the Subcommittees to increase funding for Welfare Assistance to strengthen and stabilize families so that they are able to pursue job opportunities and ultimately become self-sufficient.

Conclusion

The Duckwater Shoshone Tribe appreciates your consideration of our requests outlined in this testimony. On behalf of the Tribe, I would be happy to provide any other additional information as requested by the Subcommittees.