



Written Testimony of  
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**JAMESTOWN S'KLALLAM TRIBE** submitted to the  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies  
**“2026 Appropriations Testimony for USFWS., BIA/BIE, and IHS”**  
February 26, 2025

On behalf of the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, I am pleased to submit this written testimony on our funding priorities and requests for the Fiscal Year 2026 Department of Interior (DOI) U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), and Indian Health Service (IHS) budgets. Tribal Governments are part of the American family of Sovereign Governments with a unique legal standing that is predicated on the Nation-to-Nation political relationship that arose from trust and treaty obligations and is rooted in the U.S. Constitution. Federal programs and services for Tribes are not racial or preference programs and Tribes are not special interest groups, we are Sovereign Nations. Federal programs for American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI's/AN's) are a core part of trust and treaty obligations and represent the legal commitment of the United States to Tribal Nations. Tribal funding is not discretionary, and Tribes must not become collateral damage in the Administration's implementation of its Executive Orders and priorities.

**Tribal Funding Priority for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, DOI**

**\$1.14 Million Inclusive of Base Funding, Deferred Maintenance, Direct and Indirect Costs for the Operation and Maintenance of the National Wildlife Refuge Self-Governance Co-Stewardship Agreement**

**Top Three Tribal Priorities and Recommendations for the BIA/BIE and IHS:**

- 1. Advanced Appropriations for Tribal Programs and Services**
- 2. Mandatory Appropriations for Section 105(l) Leases and Contract Support Costs (CSC)**
- 3. Increase Funding for Tribal Base Budgets**

**Tribal Priorities, National & Regional Requests and Recommendations for the BIA:**

- 1. Trust Natural Resources/Treaty Rights/Habitat Restoration**
  - **\$60 million BIA Rights Protection Implementation**
  - **\$17.1 million Western Washington Fisheries Management**
  - **\$10 million Wildlife & Parks Program TPA**
- 2. Human Services**
  - **\$79 million Social Services**
  - **\$78 million Welfare Assistance**
  - **\$26 million Indian Child Welfare Act**

**Tribal Priorities, National and Regional Requests and Recommendations for the IHS:**

- 1. Protect IHS and Tribally Operated Facilities from Harmful Healthcare Reform**
- 2. \$47 million to Support Current Services**
- 3. \$10 million for Purchased and Referred Care**

As this Subcommittee is aware, the Administration's early actions have demonstrated their lack of understanding of the Government to Government relationship with Tribal Nations as evidenced by the freezing and reallocating of Federal funding for Tribes, firing essential Federal

employees needed to carry out trust and treaty obligations to Tribes, and proposing changes to important Tribal programs, such as, education, trust natural resources, and environmental justice that protect and preserve our treaty rights among others. The Administration has acknowledged that its actions are not intended to affect ongoing legal requirements; therefore, Indian Country programs must be fully restored, essential Federal staff must be maintained to carry out critical services, and Tribes must be explicitly exempted from any programmatic changes and proposed funding cuts, reductions, and/or rescissions intended to reduce Federal spending. We call upon this Subcommittee and Congressional Appropriators to uphold the trust and treaty obligations of the United States and hold Tribes harmless from any restructuring efforts or funding measures that do not align with the United States' ongoing legal requirements. We remind Congress of the statutory language requiring consultation with Tribes prior to any Executive action that will impact Tribal programs and Tribal funding.

This year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA) of 1975 (P.L.93-638, 25 U.S.C. §§ 5301 et. Seq.), which is the cornerstone of Tribal Self-Governance and Self-Determination – the most successful Federal Indian policy. Since the ISDEAA was enacted, Congress has authorized the expansion of Self-Determination and Self-Governance within existing Departments and created ISDEAA-like authorities across the Federal government. Empowering Tribes with increased autonomy and flexibility to design and administer programs and services that best align with our community's values and needs has improved service delivery, produced better programmatic outcomes, and resulted in Federal cost savings. Congress can further the success of Tribal Self-Governance and Self-Determination and support strong Tribal governments, economies, and communities by continuing to invest in Tribal programs and services, reclassifying Contract Support Costs (CSC) and 105(l) leases as mandatory obligations, and allowing funding from all Federal agencies to flow through funding mechanisms that empower Tribes, such as, Self-Governance compacts and Self-Determination contracts.

**Tribal Funding Priority for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, DOI – \$1.14 Million Self-Governance Co-Stewardship Agreement**

**National Wildlife Refuge Self-Governance Co-Stewardship Agreement** – In August of 2024, the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) established the first Self-Governance Co-Stewardship Agreement in Washington State for the management of two National Wildlife Refuges (NWR(s)), the Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge and Protection Island National Wildlife Refuge. Jamestown has significant historical, cultural, and spiritual connections to these NWR(s) that date back millennia and a vested interest in ensuring the health and vitality of the NWR(s) ecosystems to protect our Treaty rights, culture and livelihoods that are inter-twined with the natural environment. The area that these NWR(s) encompass is part of our ancestral homelands and waterways, and it is critical to the preservation of our oral history, creation stories, language, ceremonies, and culture for future generations. Tribal Nations, in exercising their Self-Governance authority, have developed very sophisticated and comprehensive approaches to implementing programs and services at the local level using holistic techniques, innovative solutions, and partnerships that have proven successful in leveraging the Federal dollar to yield a higher return on the investment.

**Top Three Tribal Priorities and Recommendations for the BIA/BIE and IHS:**

**1. Advanced Appropriations for Tribal Programs and Services**

## **2. Mandatory Appropriations for Section 105(l) Leases and Contract Support Costs (CSC)**

### **3. Increase Funding for Tribal Base Budgets**

**Advance Appropriations for Tribal Programs and Services** – We urge Congress to make Advance Appropriations for the Indian Health Service (IHS) permanent and to extend advance appropriations to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). Providing appropriations one year in advance for the IHS, BIA, and BIE will mitigate the adverse financial effects of Federal budgetary uncertainties and prevent disruption of critical services, including healthcare and law enforcement, among other services. Advance Appropriations will also allow Tribes to engage in more effective strategic planning, spend funds more efficiently, grow our Tribal economies and businesses and increase the quality of care and well-being of our Tribal citizens and community.

**Reclassify Discretionary Spending for Section 105(l) Leases and Contract Support Costs to Mandatory** – Funding for 105(l) leases and Contract Support Costs (CSC) must be reclassified as mandatory funding obligations because they are legally required payments to Tribes under the ISDEAA. The separate and indefinite accounts established to support Section 105(l) leases and CSC have resulted in the unintended reduction of Federal funding for critical Tribal programs. As 105(l) and CSC continue to increase, funding for all other programs and services at the IHS, BIA, and BIE are flat or are subject to imposed reductions. A recent court ruling confirmed that Tribes must be paid CSC on revenue from Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurance with estimates of an additional \$2 billion accruing to cover these costs. Congress can address this by simply re-classifying these “indefinite discretionary” appropriations as mandatory funding obligations.

**Increase Funding for Tribal Base Budgets** – Tribal Priority Allocations (TPA) and Recurring Programs are consistently identified as funding priorities by the Tribal Interior Budget Council (TIBC) because they provide core funding that supports critical government programs and services. There has been a growing trend among agencies to fund Tribal programs and services with grant dollars rather than providing base and recurring funding. Grant funding is incongruent with the trust and treaty obligations and should only be used to supplement not supplant Tribal base dollars.

### **Tribal Priorities, National & Regional Requests and Recommendations for the BIA:**

#### **3. Trust Natural Resources/Treaty Rights/Habitat Restoration**

- **\$60 million BIA Rights Protection Implementation**
- **\$17.1 million Western Washington Fisheries Management**
- **\$10 million Wildlife & Parks Program TPA**

#### **4. Human Services**

- **\$70 million Social Services**
- **\$100 million Welfare Assistance**
- **\$30 million Indian Child Welfare Act**

**Trust Natural Resources/Treaty Rights/Habitat Restoration** – The Federal investment in our trust natural resource programs: Rights Protection Implementation, Western Washington Fisheries Management and Wildlife and Parks is essential to preserve our Treaty rights and grow Tribal economies of scale. Combining Tribal ecological knowledge with advanced technology in marine science bolsters the protection and restoration of these critical ecosystems, habitats, and species that are part of our ancestral homelands and waterways. A balanced approach to resource

management prioritizes sustainable conservation policies and practices while simultaneously ensuring long term economic growth that fosters Tribal self-sufficiency. This balanced approach allows us to protect and preserve our natural resources, grow our economies, create jobs, and promote and advance trade of our marine resources in local, regional, national, and international markets. We also cultivate partnerships with state and local governments and other entities with shared interests that serve to elevate local and regional economies. The vitality and sustainability of our natural resources is integral to the preservation of our Treaty rights, the health and welfare of our citizens, communities, culture, traditions, ceremonies, and local economies.

**Human Services/Social Services/Welfare Assistance/ICWA** – It is legally inaccurate to deem the Federal investment in programs that serve our most vulnerable citizens, our elders, our children, and our Tribal families as social services. The Human Services that Tribes provide to their citizens and communities arise from Federal trust and treaty obligations that are legally mandated and continue in perpetuity. The return on this investment is measured by the increased number of Tribal citizens and descendants entering higher education and earning degrees, our growing workforce that is comprised of over 80% Tribal citizens, descendants, and other Natives, and participation in cultural preservation classes that instill a sense of pride in our people to create marketable products and entrepreneurship opportunities. Indian Child Welfare respects Tribal sovereignty and recognizes that AI/AN children have a unique legal status as citizens of Tribal governments. The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) provides safeguards to maintain Tribal and family connections and relationships, preventing further generational trauma and the loss of our culture, our language, and our identity as a people. These programs ensure our existence as a community through flourishing language, traditional foods, and culture programs.

**Tribal Priorities, National and Regional Requests and Recommendations for the IHS:**

- 1. Protect IHS and Tribally Operated Facilities from Harmful Healthcare Reform**
- 2. \$46 million to Support Current Services**
- 3. \$10 million for Purchased and Referred Care**

**Protect IHS and Tribally Operated Facilities from Harmful Healthcare Reform and Maintain Funding for Current Services/Purchased Referred Care** – IHS Appropriations fund less than 50% of the healthcare needs of AI/AN people. Third-party revenues allow us to leverage healthcare dollars and expand services to meet the healthcare needs of our citizens wherever they reside and are crucial to addressing the healthcare disparities caused by the historic and chronic underfunding of the IHS for decades. At our Tribal health clinic, at least 20% of the revenue generated is due to third party revenue and it accounts for 60% of our revenue at our Healing Campus. We urge Congress to protect IHS and Tribally operated facilities from harmful healthcare reform efforts. The Federal trust obligation requires significant investment in Tribal healthcare systems, yet Tribes are often forced to use their own limited resources to supplement programs or limit or shut down services completely. To maintain current services, factors such as the inflationary rate, pay costs, contract support costs, population growth and staffing needs for recently constructed facilities all need to be fully funded. Purchased and Referred Care (PRC) funds are used to purchase essential health care services and are extremely important to the Portland Area Tribes because the Portland Area lacks hospitals and specialty care centers, so Tribes in the Northwest are forced to turn to the private sector to fulfill this need.

The Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe continues to support the requests and recommendations of our National Tribal Organizations. Thank you.