

**Testimony of
James Naranjo, Governor of the Santa Clara Pueblo, New Mexico
American Indian and Alaska Native Public Witness Hearings
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
March 17, 2026**

Introduction. Thank you, Chairperson Simpson, Ranking Member Pingree, and Members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to share Santa Clara Pueblo's funding priorities for the FY 2027 federal budget. My name is James Naranjo, and I am the Governor of Santa Clara Pueblo in New Mexico. As discussed further below, my testimony covers various critical programs and functions that represent the federal trust responsibility to Tribal Nations. My testimony addresses specific recommendations, centering around public health and safety issues, among others, regarding the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Indian Education, NPS, Indian Health Service, and Forest Service, including:

Recommendations:

- Provide full funding for Tribal-serving programs at DOI, BIA, BIE, USFS, and IHS.
- BIA—Increased funding for tribal law enforcement and tribal courts; pay parity for Tribal law enforcement officers; support emergency response and disaster recovery funding.
- IHS—Provide funding to address fentanyl and opioid epidemic; behavioral and mental health programs; construction and renovation of health facilities, including behavioral health.
- DOI, USFS—Provide adequate funding for wildland fire response and recovery.
- DOI—provide funding to implement the Safeguard Tribal Objects of Patrimony (STOP) Act; funding moratorium related to energy leasing in the Greater Chaco Region.
- BIE—teacher pay parity; construction and renovation of Tribally Controlled School facilities; Tribal Education Department and Sovereignty in Education Grants; Indian School Equalization Program.
- NPS – \$40 million for Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs).

Background on Santa Clara Pueblo. Santa Clara Pueblo has resided in north-central New Mexico and operated as a sovereign government since time immemorial. We have formed political relationships with foreign governments dating back to at least the 16th century, when we negotiated treaties with the Spanish conquistadores during their early explorations of the southwest. Both the Spanish Crown and the United States recognized the Pueblos' right to self-rule and declared that Pueblos be presided over by Tribal Governors with ownership of their land. While the Pueblo's proud, culturally and traditionally rich, and tragic history cannot be fully conveyed in this testimony, it is critical that Congress understands the Pueblo's background and history since it is important for fulfilling the federal government's trust responsibility. Also, the Pueblo's culture, including our traditional Tewa language, inform our approach to law enforcement, healthcare, education, and other services our government provides to its citizens.

Ensure Full Funding and Proper Staffing of Federal Offices Serving Tribes. Despite the federal trust responsibility, we continue to see underfunding of the IHS, BIA, BIE, and other Tribal-serving offices, harming Tribes and their citizens through lack of sufficient funding to Tribal governments as well as by insufficient federal staff to carry out essential federal functions.

I applaud this Subcommittee for its commitment to Tribal Nations and Tribal sovereignty and urge you to *ensure full funding for Tribal programs, including adjustments for inflation, to reject any requests to reduce funding for federal employees that serve Indian country, and to ensure offices serving Tribes are properly and fully staffed.*

Pay Parity for Tribal Public Safety and Teachers. The Pueblo takes great pride in recruiting and training high quality public safety officials and teachers. These positions are vital to ensuring that our community is safe for all and that we provide support for future generations. Both also play a significant role in protecting Tribal youth from the harms of fentanyl and other illegal substances. However, the Pueblo has struggled to retain skilled individuals due to higher paying positions with the federal or state governments. *We urge increased funding to the BIA and BIE to support Tribal public safety officials and teachers to establish pay parity with federal employees.*

Address Fentanyl and Opioid Epidemic, Including by Funding Behavioral Health Programs. Santa Clara Pueblo has been hit extremely hard by the fentanyl and opioid epidemic, which poses public safety and public health concerns. Despite the detrimental impact of the epidemic, there is insufficient funding to respond to the needs of our citizens and the surrounding community. In addition to needed law enforcement funding to address this epidemic, there is insufficient healthcare-related funding to address this crisis, such as detoxification-related services from IHS. We urge the Subcommittee to fund such services. Santa Clara citizens who need behavioral health or addiction treatment services have few to no options for rehabilitation in the area. The Pueblo often sends them elsewhere, but when they are released, they have no support services at home. *We urge the Subcommittee to invest in community-based and built treatment and services so that our community can heal.*

Tribal Law Enforcement and Courts. Tribal law enforcement and emergency services personnel strive to provide high-quality and responsive public safety services but must often do this notwithstanding the effects of serious understaffing and insufficient resources. We urge a minimum of \$350 million for BIA Criminal Investigations and Police Services to effectively serve and protect our community, including additional resources for officer equipment, training, and innovation. Additionally, our Tribal Court requires additional resources to continue functioning efficiently and to address challenges related to resources, facilities, and court administration. *To strengthen our court system, we encourage the Subcommittee to maintain its commitment to public safety and justice on Tribal lands and ask for at least \$100 million for Tribal Courts (TPA). We also seek dedicated funding for a Special Assistant U.S. Attorney to prosecute cases in Santa Clara Tribal and federal court to address the fentanyl and opioid epidemic.*

Provide Full and Advance Appropriations for the IHS. The IHS faces annually compounding challenges related to supplies, staffing levels, infrastructure and facilities, and high rates of negative health outcomes among AI/ANs as a result of the chronic failure to fully fund trust and treaty obligations in Indian health. We thank the Subcommittee for its work to support advance appropriations for the IHS. Santa Clara urges the Committee to support making advance appropriations permanent and expand advance appropriations for: services, facilities, contract support costs, payments for section 105(l) leases, and Electronic Health records, and to support a

multi-billion dollar increase to achieve full funding in FY 2027.

Fund Healthcare Infrastructure. The Indian health facilities that serve Santa Clara and the surrounding community, namely the Santa Clara Health Clinic and the Santa Fe Service Unit, are in serious need of repair or replacement. In addition to being in dire need of staff, the clinic cannot meet healthcare needs with the existing aging infrastructure. *We ask for significant dedicated funding, including Construction and Maintenance and Improvement (M&I) funding, for needed maintenance and construction to address aging facilities serving Santa Clara, including the Santa Clara Field Clinic and the Santa Fe Service Unit.*

DOI and USFS Disaster Recovery and Prevention Programs, Including Wildland Fire Response and Recovery. The stewardship of natural resources is key to both the economic and cultural well-being of Pueblo people, particularly in this era of increasing natural disasters. Santa Clara has been devastated by three catastrophic wildfires with the threat of new fires and floods always on the horizon. We have invested heavily in the development of fire preparedness and suppression resources to protect life and property. We understand the fundamental importance of beneficial partnerships with the BIA, USFS, and other agencies in this effort. Because of this work, we are proud to say that Santa Clara is home to award-winning Tribal forestry and land management departments. Expanding access to BIA disaster programs and deepening the resources available is critical. *We ask for an increase across all these line items. We request sufficient funding for the newly established DOI Office of Wildland Fire and sufficient and permanent funding to the USFS for the Tribal Forest Protection Act/638 Project Authority.*

\$20 Million to Establish a BIA Emergency Response Fund. Many Tribal governments are hindered by the upfront investment costs and cost-sharing requirements of certain federal emergency response programs. When coupled with bureaucratic delays in distributing funds, it often takes an unacceptable amount of time to receive disaster relief precisely when time is of the essence. We anticipate the need for these resources will only continue to grow and with quick access to funding becoming a top response need. *We recommend an initial amount of \$20 million be allocated to establish a BIA Emergency Response Fund within the Office of Trust Services.*

\$50 Million for the Tribal Community Resilience Program; Restore Cooperative Landscape Conservation Programs. Across America, communities are facing mounting challenges related to our increasingly unstable natural environment. Invasive species, disappearing tree lines, and accelerated rates of erosion are also taking an increasing toll on our agricultural and natural resources. These two DOI programs equip Tribes with the tools to manage resource stressors, develop adaptive management plans, and engage in intergovernmental coordination. *We request at least \$50 million for the BIA Tribal Community Resilience Program and to restore adequate funding for Department-wide Cooperative Landscape Conservation programs.*

Increase Funding for BIE Tribal Education Department (TED) and Sovereignty in Education Grants. These funds support the development of TEDs to improve educational outcomes for students and efficiencies and effectiveness in the operation of BIE-funded schools.

The goal of the grants is to promote Tribal educational capacity building, which it has achieved in our community through our Department of Youth and Learning and Pueblo-operated Kha'p'o Community School. *To strengthen the exercise of sovereignty in Tribal education, additional funding is needed for these grants, particularly as the TED line item has been flat funded for several appropriations cycles.*

\$250 Million for BIE Facilities Operations and \$950 Million for BIE Facilities Maintenance and Construction. To flourish academically and personally, we must provide our children with safe and vibrant classrooms and engaging areas to play, as well as with after-hours wraparound services, but too many Tribal school facilities are in various states of disrepair. The backlog of unmet needs for these accounts has grown exponentially. *We urge full funding of this unmet need for BIE Facilities Maintenance and for Operations.*

\$700 Million for the Indian School Equalization Program (ISEP). These funds provide the core budget account for BIE-funded schools by covering teacher salaries, aides, principals, and other personnel. ISEP funds are often reallocated to cover the program cuts in other areas of education. ISEP must have adequate funding to ensure all program needs are fulfilled and must not be reduced to provide funds for new initiatives that have not been vetted by Tribes. *We strongly support an influx of investment in the ISEP in FY 2027 to at least \$700 million.*

\$3 Million for Funding Implementation of the Safeguard Tribal Objects of Patrimony (STOP) Act. This law assures the protection of many sensitive Tribal items from illegal export. It is important to put in place the necessary resources in the federal government to enable this law to be implemented. President Trump previously articulated support for the STOP Act and was critical to its passage. *We request that \$3 million be allocated for FY 2027 for the purposes of implementation and enforcement of this law.*

Funding Moratorium Related to Energy Leasing in the Greater Chaco Region. The Greater Chaco Region is an irreplaceable sacred landscape which surrounds the Chaco Culture National Historical Park and contains innumerable cultural resources and sites sacred to Pueblos and Tribal Nations. *We request that Congress maintain the moratorium on oil and gas leasing on federal land in the withdrawal area of the Great Chaco Region.* We request that that moratorium span the lifetime of the legislation and use the following language “None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to accept a nomination for oil and gas leasing under 43 CFR 3120.6 et seq., or to offer for oil and gas leasing, any Federal lands within the withdrawal area identified in the map of the Chaco Culture National Historical Park prepared by the Bureau of Land Management and dated April 2, 2019.” This moratorium would allow the United States to both further its domestic energy production priorities while still honoring and protecting an irreplaceable landscape significant to Pueblos and Tribal Nations. The United States can still unleash American energy and meet domestic production needs for American prosperity through the upwards of 90% of land already leased for oil and gas development in the greater San Juan Basin.

At least \$40 million for Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs). The preservation of Tribal sacred and cultural sites is a priority for all Indian Country. Damage to these sites is often irreversible, forever altering the way in which we can express ourselves as Tribal people. *The Pueblo requests at least \$40 million for THPO support in FY 2027.*