

**Statement of Senator Tim Johnson**  
**Senate Committee on Indian Affairs**  
**February 11, 2004**

Chairman Campbell, Vice, Chairman Inouye, members of the Committee, thank you for holding this hearing on the vital issue of funding for Indian programs. I will keep my comments brief but I do want to highlight a few of the problems I have with the President's budget.

Needless to say, I am more than a little disappointed with the President's priorities. We are spending a billion a week over in Iraq, building hospitals and schools, while the President proposes that we cut funding for construction of hospitals and schools here at home. The President recommends that IHS health facilities construction would be gutted from \$94 million in 2004 to \$42 million in 2005. Additionally, overall, the BIA school construction account is being cut by \$65.9 million. There are over forty schools desperately waiting for construction and repair. The backlog is long and the need is immediate. The President's proposal makes no sense.

Broadly speaking, I am concerned that the President wants to fund trust reform at the expense of Indian programs. While trust reform is necessary and I'm encouraged that the President has increased the amount of money going towards the buying back of fractionalized land, it is implorable that the Office of Special Trustee is getting such a huge advance and the tribes suffer.

The injustice in the budget is rife with examples. Important to my South Dakota tribes is the President's request pertaining to the tribal priority allocation (TPA) funding. The President's request is \$775.6 million, a small increase of \$4.9 million. TPA funds are critical because tribes use them to carry out day-to-day government programs and functions. The President's request is simply inadequate, therefore impeding self determination.

Within BIA and OST, there is an initiative that I found particularly interesting -- the creation of a new Office of Tribal Consultation at BIA with a whopping \$1.1 million budget. The President wants to create an office to do a function that his administration is already required to do. I'm sure President Steele, who is sitting here in the audience today, can find much better uses for \$1.1 million dollars on the Pine Ridge reservation, where, as we speak, his constituent are wondering how they are going to heat their homes tomorrow.

As the testimony today will reflect, every aspect of Indian funding is hurting -- housing, healthcare, education, infra-structure. I understand that this is a tough fiscal year and I understand that the tribes won't get every need fulfilled. However, there are many problems with the President's budget. We must do better. As a member of the Budget and the Appropriations Committee, and working closely with Senators Campbell and Inouye, I will do what I can to correct those problems.