

**TESTIMONY
OF
EDDIE F. BROWN
ON
THE REPORT OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION TITLED, "A STUDY OF MANAGEMENT AND
ADMINISTRATION: THE BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS"
BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, D.C.
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Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. My name is Eddie Brown and I currently serve as the Associate Dean and Director of the Kathryn M. Buder Center for American Indian Studies at the George Warren Brown School of Social Work, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri. As a panel member of the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to discuss the proposed recommendations outlined in our report titled, "A Study of Management and Administration: The Bureau of Indian Affairs."

I commend Assistant Secretary Gover for his leadership and insistence that such a study be conducted. I also want to thank the other members of the NAPA Panel and members of the Study Team for their efforts to ensure an independent, nonpartisan report.

The objective of the NAPA study was to identify and recommend actions that would improve the quality, efficiency and cost effectiveness of the Bureau of Indian Affairs' internal operations.

My comments this morning will address three areas of concern: (1) first, management and administrative weaknesses of the Bureau of Indian Affairs; (2) the need to provide the office of Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs with the necessary administrative support to oversee the Bureau's programs; and (3) the need for collaboration and coordination of all stakeholders.

First, as a member of the NAPA study panel, I strongly concur with the overall findings of the report, which stated that:

...the current management and administration of the BIA are not fully adequate to meet all of its trust responsibilities to American Indian and Alaska Natives, to carry out the numerous statutory responsibilities, and to operate an effective and efficient agency. Specifically, there is no existing capability to provide budget, human resources, policy, and other types of management assistance to the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs and the Bureau. Staff do not receive adequate training in management and administrative skills and techniques, and BIA does not have adequate

standards by which to determine its management and administrative requirements for resources and staffing. Strategic planning, yearly performance planning, and program analysis are not institutionalized. Important policy manuals and implementation handbooks are out of date. In short, neither the Office of the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs nor the Bureau has the internal staff capabilities that typically support managerial and administrative excellence (p. viii).

These findings coincide with the earlier external and internal evaluations of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which have consistently pointed to the need for administrative and management reforms. As a result, the inability of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to correct these weaknesses has made it difficult for the Bureau to obtain the administrative and congressional support needed to address the funding needs of tribal programs.

Early in my term as Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs in 1991, I was confronted by a representative of the administration and told that the BIA was bankrupt and needed to be taken into receivership. I strongly disagreed with the statement and proceeded to work with the administration and tribal governments to reorganize the Bureau to more effectively execute its trust responsibilities and to ensure the facilitation of tribal self-determination and self-governance. While some success was achieved, the overall reorganization of the Bureau was minimal at best. In 1996, major reductions in the central administration of the Bureau were made, further eroding its administrative capability. Today, however, I believe these reductions and the failure to address the need for reorganization have brought the Bureau of Indian Affairs to the brink of bankruptcy.

The seriousness of the Bureau's administrative and management weaknesses can no longer be avoided, ignored or supported through half-hearted attempts to rectify these major problems. The Bureau of Indian Affairs is an agency under siege. We have reached the point where all stakeholders must make a concerted effort to invest in the Bureau to ensure that it can effectively carry out its trust obligations and the facilitation of tribal self-determination. To this end, the NAPA study has recommended a strategy that, if properly funded and executed, would over time assist the Office of the Assistant Secretary and the BIA to:

...build a performance based organization that establishes realistic goals, matches resources to the accomplishment of those goals, assesses performance, and ultimately reduces the role of the U.S. government in Indian affairs while retaining its trust responsibility (p. v).

If Congress, the Administration and tribal governments choose not to support the investment necessary to correct these administrative and managerial weaknesses, then we must be prepared to accept the eventual dismantling of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Second, although the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs is the primary federal advocate for American Indians and Alaska Natives and is responsible to see that existing Bureau programs are well coordinated, new initiatives effectively integrated, and resources efficiently distributed, the NAPA study concluded that the Office of the Assistant Secretary:

...does not have the internal staff capabilities necessary to support achievement of managerial and administrative excellence. His small staff focuses primarily on administering the self-governance program and resolving audit findings. It does not provide the specialized knowledge and skills the assistant secretary needs to plan, organize, control, and direct the work of the Bureau, to integrate BIA's activities, or to lead the Bureau in achieving its goals and objectives (p. 33).

Based on these findings, members of the NAPA Panel recommended that the first step should be to provide the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs with the necessary administrative and managerial structures and sufficient staff to lead the Bureau in planning, budgeting, human resources and information resource management. These resources would allow the Assistant Secretary to effectively consult with the tribal governments and Congress in implementing its trust obligations and facilitation of tribal self-determination and self-governance.

The appropriation of \$5 million in the FY 2000 budget for the establishment of the Office of Policy and Planning within the Office of the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs marked the first step toward reinvesting in the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The staffing of this office is essential to the future success of the proposed NAPA recommendations and provides the base for the further implementation of the proposed NAPA strategy. The Assistant Secretary will need the continued assistance of NAPA staff and the cooperation and support of all stakeholders to guarantee the recruitment of senior managers who possess demonstrated competencies in the areas of policy development, management and budget.

Once the Office of Policy and Planning is established, a thorough review of field offices will be necessary to determine staff requirements for the improvement of identified management weaknesses. The Assistant Secretary's request for \$9.2 million in the FY 2001 budget would then be used for additional field positions staffed with well-trained and qualified individuals. The Panel suggested that these funds not be released until the new Office of Policy and Planning verify that additional funds are necessary for effective implementation of the managerial improvements identified in the NAPA report.

Third, successfully implementing the NAPA recommendations for improving the internal management and administration of the Bureau will require considerable work, time and resources. This will necessitate: strong creative leadership within the Office of the Assistant Secretary and BIA administration; the support of the Department of Interior *and* the Office of Management and Budget; and allocation

of necessary funds from Congress. It will also require the consultation, support and cooperation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs' major stakeholders – tribal governments. While the NAPA report speaks to the needs of ensuring tribal self-determination through consultation and partnership with tribes, it does not provide any specific recommendations to ensure that this occurs. Previous and current BIA/Tribal initiatives that are directly related to the internal administration and management of the Bureau, such as the Joint Tribal/BIA/DOI reorganization recommendations and the determination of tribal and residual shares, must be considered in implementing the proposed NAPA plan. A process must be developed to allow the Assistant Secretary's office and tribes to jointly consider these initiatives in the Bureau's restructuring efforts. There must be reassurance that on-going collaboration with tribes regarding how changes to the internal structure and addition of staff will further promote tribal self-determination efforts and fulfill BIA's trust obligations.

In conclusion, I concur with the statement:

In this report, the Academy panel recommends a series of reforms. None is new. But together they constitute an agenda that is critical and ambitious, yet achievable. (p. v)

Thank you and I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.