



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS TESTIMONY ON THE PRESIDENT'S FY 2004 BUDGET REQUEST FOR INDIAN PROGRAMS

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Senate Committee on Indian Affairs February 26, 2003

On behalf of the more than 250 member tribal nations of the National Congress of American Indians, we are pleased to present testimony on the President's fiscal year 2004 budget request for Indian programs.

On February 3, President Bush proposed a \$2.29 trillion budget for FY 2004 that included largely level funding for Indian programs, continuing the trend of consistent declines in federal per capita spending for Indians compared to per capita expenditures for the population at large. This trend demonstrates the abject failure of the federal government to commit the serious resources needed to fully honor its trust commitment to Indian tribes.

As you know, the federal trust responsibility represents the legal obligation made by the U.S. government to Indian tribes when our lands were ceded to the United States. This obligation is codified in numerous treaties, statutes, Presidential directives, judicial opinions, and international doctrines. It can be divided into three general areas – protection of Indian trust lands; protection of tribal self-governance; and provision of basic social, medical, and educational services for tribal members.

NCAI realizes Congress must make difficult budget choices this year. As elected officials, tribal leaders certainly understand the competing priorities that you must weigh over the coming months. However, the fact that the federal government has a solemn responsibility to address the serious needs facing Indian Country remains unchanged, whatever the economic climate. We at NCAI urge you to make a strong, across-the-

board commitment to meeting the federal trust obligation by fully funding those programs that are vital to the creation of vibrant Indian Nations. Such a commitment, coupled with continued efforts to strengthen tribal governments and to clarify the government-to-government relationship, truly will make a difference in helping us to create stable, diversified, and healthy economies in Indian Country.

Our testimony focuses on the key areas of concern surrounding the President's budget request. Of course, there are numerous other federal programs and initiatives that are important to American Indians and Alaska Natives. Attached is an agency-by-agency breakdown detailing key programs that benefit Indian Nations. NCAI urges Congress to support each of these programs at the highest possible funding level as the budget and appropriations process moves forward.

NCAI and tribes nationwide are concerned with the Office of Management and Budget's move toward a Program Assessment Rating Tool or "PART" methodology for rating the effectiveness of agencies, using the findings to make decisions regarding budgets and policy. There is a huge problem with this concept as it relates to funding for tribes—the federal government has a trust responsibility to *tribes*, plain and simple. It is a trust responsibility that derives from what tribes have already given up—vast amounts of land, the very foundation of this nation. The effectiveness of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Indian Health Service, or any agency providing services to tribes is not relevant to that responsibility.

The idea of cutting funding for programs that benefit tribes as a result of poor ratings for the managing agency is problematic. There is no logic in punishing the service population for the shortcomings of the serving agency, which in many cases is simply a middleman for delivering funding to tribes—funding and services which the federal government has effectively entered into a contract to provide to tribes in exchange for the lands they gave up. The federal government should *certainly* work to improve the effectiveness of the BIA and other agencies

serving tribes—but not by cutting critical funding for tribes. On the contrary, for decades it has been demonstrated that these programs are significantly hobbled by *underfunding*, and *increased* appropriations are key to any real improvements.

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS/OFFICE OF SPECIAL TRUSTEE

The President has requested essentially level funding for the Department of Interior at \$10.7 billion. However, by pooling resources from other DOI programs, an additional \$168.5 million has been dedicated to trust management and related activities. To compensate for such increases, several programs are slated to lose funding. Other key areas of the BIA budget, such as tribal Priority Allocations and initiatives that support public safety, education, and economic development, remain deeply under-funded.

Tribal Priority Allocations (TPA). TPA funding is the main source of tribal resources to provide governmental services at the local level for most tribes. Funding for this account supports on-going services at the local tribal level for such critical needs as housing, education, natural resource management and tribal government services. This account, key to tribal self-determination in identifying local priorities for resources, has been deeply underfunded for years. Unfortunately, the proposed FY04 budget requests only a \$5 million increase to this account. NCAI recommends a minimum increase of \$25 million in BIA TPA funding for inflationary adjustments.

A 2001 Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report on Indian-related federal spending trends for FY1975 - FY2000 states that increases in the combined BIA/Office of Special Trustee "current" dollars averaged \$46 million per year. But in "constant" dollars (adjusted for inflation), there has actually been a decline of approximately \$6 million per year. At a minimum, the requested amount will provide for a modest 3.5% inflation adjustment for existing tribal programs and services. We further recommend that TPA be revised and possibly re-named "tribal Family & Community Services" to better reflect the true nature and intent of these programs. We believe that this title will help to better identify the purpose

of this critical funding pool.

The Census Bureau's *Poverty in the United States* for 2000 showed that American Indians and Alaska Natives remain at the bottom of the economic ladder – with 25.9 percent of our population falling below the poverty line. This compares to an 11.9 percent poverty rate for all races combined. Simply put, tribal governments simply cannot continue to provide essential government services to our growing – and disproportionately poor – population without a substantial increase in our TPA funds.

Office of Special Trustee. As stated earlier, the budget request includes a significant initiative to increase funding for trust management within the BIA and the Office of Special Trustee. The Office of Special Trustee would receive a \$123 million increase – to \$275 million – which is partially offset by a \$63 million cut to the BIA Construction and an \$8 million cut to Indian Water and Claims Settlements. Of BIA Construction accounts, Education Construction will lose \$32 million—despite a terrible backlog of new school construction needs that everyone agrees must be taken care of promptly. Tribal leaders have repeatedly emphasized that funding needed to correct problems and inefficiencies in DOI trust management must not come from existing BIA programs or administrative monies. It is critical that the Department request additional funding from Congress to correct the internal problems they created through their administrative mistakes rather than depleting existing, insufficient BIA program dollars for these purposes.

We see further cause for concern in the unilateralism demonstrated by the Department of Interior in its sweeping reorganization of trust functions within the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Administration's request for significant new resources for trust reform without a clear plan for accountability in place. Increased funding for the Office of Special Trustee has the potential to be money well spent—but it is an empty promise without clear accountability in place and a plan set forth to work with the impacted tribes and individuals whose accounts are at stake. Tribes have a wealth of experience in identifying what works and

what does not within BIA—we've been on the receiving end of the agency's functions and dysfunctions for years. We urge Congress to give the Administration incentive—or a *mandate* if need be—to work in close consultation with tribes on this issue as they fund their proposed reorganization, because while it may appear more cumbersome at the outset to consult with tribes who may not always agree, the results can not be effective if the full spectrum of tribal voices—the accountholders whose monies are at stake here—are not brought on as partners in approaching these critical reforms.

Contract Support Costs (CSC). Contract Support Cost (CSC) funds are the key to self-determination for tribes—these funds ensure that tribes have the resources that any contractor would require to successfully manage decentralized programs. An additional \$25 million is needed in BIA to fully fund CSC (excluding direct contract support costs). This shortfall continues to penalize tribes that elect to operate BIA and IHS programs under the self-determination policy. Additional CSC appropriations are needed to implement the self-determination and self-governance policy as supported by Congress. We urge the Subcommittee to fully fund CSC for tribes at a level equal to the rates at which other contractors are funded within the federal government.

For the past 12 years, the Self-Governance Communication and Education Project (SGCEP) has provided technical assistance and factual information about Self-Governance. There are now over 250 tribes implementing Self-Governance and the request for information regarding this initiative continues to increase. The SGCEP is vital to ensure that Self-Governance and its purposes are clearly understood and consistently developed by participating tribal governments, federal agency officials and non-participating tribes. Funding for this project has never been increased in its 12 years of existence, and is now inadequate to keep up with the volume of information requests. We respectfully request that this funding not only be restored to \$256,000, but increased by an additional \$100,000 to meet the real cost of providing these communication services. Further, funding must also be restored for the tribal Leaders Self-Governance Advisory Committee. This Committee provides advice and guidance to the

Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs on key policy issues that impact Self-Governance tribes, and has proven to be an effective forum for tribal leaders to debate and discuss these issues.

Office of Indian Education Programs (OIEP). The proposed BIA budget fails to adequately address BIA school needs in two areas. The funding proposed for Administrative Cost Grants – the section of the budget designed to cover the costs of sound management of tribally operated schools – would not come close to addressing the drastic shortfalls faced in the account. Despite a small increase proposed in the FY 2004 request, this program is currently funded at less than 70 percent of the need identified and required by law—funding should be increased to address 100 percent of the agreed upon formula for this important account, period.

Student transportation for tribally operated schools is yet another area that continually receives inadequate funding. Internal OIEP documents calculate that FY 2003 funding for student transportation was over \$20 million short of what would be needed to provide tribally operated schools with funding equivalent to the national average six years ago. This account must be increased to meet the real costs of transporting students to class—anything less ensures that critical classroom dollars will be impacted.

INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE

The budget request includes \$3.6 billion for the Indian Health Service, a \$130 million increase over the current funding level, but a de facto decrease given the absorption requirements proposed under the President's request. Of this total, \$3.2 billion is proposed for Indian health services. For facilities, \$393 million is proposed – with construction for health care facilities slated to receive a decrease in funding.

The proposed IHS budget is not enough to maintain the current level of services and account for the cost of inflation. When measured in constant dollars, per capita spending for health care in the IHS service population is actually lower today than it was in 1977. Since 1993, IHS funding has dropped well below the

rate of inflation and has not even begun to address the 27 percent hike in the IHS service population that evolved in the 1990s. In fact, IHS funding for tribal members on a per capita basis is not even *one third* of the national per capita average for health care spending in the U.S. Until substantial funding increases are made for Indian health care, IHS is forced to operate less and less effectively with each passing year, making it nearly impossible to even hold ground on the gains that have been made in Indian health, much less to proactively take on the egregious health disparities that exist for American Indians and Alaska Natives—disparities which Senate Majority Leader Frist has identified as key priorities to address.

American Indian and Alaska Native women still go without prenatal care in the first trimester 2.6 times more often than Caucasian women in the U.S. American Indian and Alaska Native adults are three times more likely to acquire diabetes. The death rate for lung cancer among native people has increased by 28% and the suicide death rate has increased by 8%. Mental disorders continue to go undiagnosed and untreated. American Indians and Alaska Native still experience death rates significantly higher than the rest of the US population and the overall life expectancy for American Indians and Alaska Natives is still about 5 years less than that of the general U.S. population.¹

American Indian and Alaska Natives have not experienced the same improvements in health disparities as other racial or ethnic groups. While important gains have been made in funding for diabetes prevention and treatment efforts, progress toward the goal of eliminating health disparities for American Indians and Alaska Natives will require coordinated, concerted efforts—and increases across the board in the IHS budget.

Once again for FY04, NCAI strongly urges Congress to consider the IHS Level-of-Need Funding Workgroup's recommendation. The Workgroup has identified an \$18 billion needs-based budget for the IHS, including a nonrecurring \$8.7 billion facilities request and \$10 billion to fully fund the health needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

¹ Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control, *Trends in Racial and Ethnic-Specific Rates for the Health Status Indicators: United States, 1990-98*, January, 2002.

A ten-year phase-in of the \$18 billion needs-based budget can be achieved through several years of appropriations increases. If a first year increase of \$2.6 billion were appropriated (a 112 percent increase), the following years' increases would decline to 20 percent in year five and 10 percent in year ten. The first year increase would be substantially more to help offset the more than \$2 billion lost to inflation over the past eight years.

This type of major investment would account for the real revenue losses due to inflation and population growth, create long-term savings to taxpayers, and eliminate the vast health disparities that exist between American Indians and Alaska Natives and the general U.S. population.

Sanitation Construction. The proposed budget includes a badly needed \$19 million increase in funds for IHS sanitation facility construction, for a total request of \$114 million for FY04. This increase is sorely needed, and greatly appreciated. But is only a small first step toward addressing the actual need on the ground for improved water and sewer access—the estimated need for new and improved sanitation facilities in Indian Country is *\$1.8 billion*. The infrastructure that does exist in our communities is inadequate, and we ask you to preserve or increase this proposed level.

HEAD START

The proposed budget would shift Head Start programs from the Department of Health and Human Services to the Department of Education, and shift the majority of funding and decision making power to the states. Tribally operated Head Start programs are one of the most important ways we are protecting the future of our people—and yet, the budget proposal does not address what will happen to these critical programs if this shift is to take place. Tribes **MUST** be consulted before such sweeping reforms are implemented on a program so critical to their future, and it is absolutely essential that tribes maintain direct federal funding for tribal Head Start programs.

CHILD CARE

The Administration's FY 2004 budget proposal includes level funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). However, since 1996, the demand for child care has leaped dramatically. The National Indian Child Care Association reports that two hundred sixty-two tribes and tribal organizations, representing more than five hundred tribal governments, received approximately \$91 million in Child Care and Development Block Grant Funds in FY 2002. As Indian parents have sought to move from welfare to work, increased participation in job training programs, and pursued educational programs, child care funding and placements have proven inadequate to meet the need of Indian families. Increased CCDBG funding is critically needed.

TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)

The Administration's 2004 budget request calls for maintaining Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) at the present funding level of \$16.89 billion. While these funds are necessary, they fall far short of meeting need. Currently, 38 tribal TANF programs serve 178 tribes in 15 states. By recommending level funding, the President's budget fails to take into consideration the economic repercussions of 9/11, pre-existing need, population growth, or inflation.

The budget crunches currently faced by States seriously affect tribal TANF. Because of the unique TANF funding formula for tribes, tribes must rely on the good will and budget surpluses of friendly state governments. In light of dwindling federal support to States and decreasing revenues collected by State governments, many States are adopting austere spending measures, leaving TANF funding in jeopardy.

The Administration's proposal also fails to provide basic infrastructure funding for tribes, a subsidy readily allotted to States. Tribes have struggled to put computer systems in place, train staff, and locate appropriate facilities for TANF offices without initial TANF grants. The importance of TANF start-up funding has been noted in several GAO studies and has proven to be the single largest barrier to the tribal adoption of TANF programs.

In short, tribal TANF funding is inadequate. Tribal governments should have adequate, flexible, stable funding for the development and support of tribal TANF programs.

ELDER CARE

NCAI supports the National Indian Council on Aging (NICOA) request that funding for Title VI of the Older Americans Act be increased from \$27.5 million to \$30 million. Funding to date for this program has never served the Title's mandate to provide services "comparable to those provided under Title III", which provides a wide range of social services to the elderly nationwide. In addition, Subtitle B of Title VII of the Act authorizes a program for entities serving Indian elders to assist in prioritizing issues relating to elder rights, but this authorization has never been funded. NICOA recommends a \$1 million demonstration grant program to increase awareness and treatment of elder abuse.

LABOR

Employment is a necessity for the economic well-being of virtually every Native American family. Yet only a handful of very small federal programs provide resources to tribes and other Native American organizations to foster a productive and effective American Indian and Alaska Native work force.

The largest program in place for this purpose is the Comprehensive Services program authorized by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). This program currently serves an estimated 30,000 American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian workers nationally, in both reservation and off-reservation areas. Funding for this program has remained stagnant over the last eight years, while costs have escalated sharply. To provide the same support for the program as its predecessor program enjoyed in 1984, funding would have to rise to over \$120 million -- far above the \$55 million proposed in the FY 2004 budget request. NCAI and the Indian and Native American Employment and Training Coalition urge the Committee to recommend an FY 2004 funding level of not

less than \$75 million for the WIA Comprehensive Services program. Additionally, we advocate the reauthorization of this program, which is set to expire at the end of FY 2003.

WIA also authorizes a Supplemental Youth Services program to serve Native youth between the ages of 14 and 21 living in reservation areas, Oklahoma, Alaska, and Hawaii. This program serves a valuable niche, targeting both in-school and out-of-school Native youth. Tens of thousands of working adults had their first experience in a workplace setting as a result of this and its predecessor programs. The President's FY 2004 budget removes all funding for this program, which would eliminate a valuable service for thousands of youth. As is the case with the other WIA programs, the Native American Supplemental Youth Services program is up for reauthorization in this session of the Congress. NCAI and the Indian and Native American Employment and Training Coalition urge the Committee to support the reauthorization of this program at a level of not less than \$25 million.

PUBLIC SAFETY

More than 200 police departments, ranging from tiny departments with only two officers to those with more than 200 officers, help to maintain public safety in Indian Country. According to a recent Justice Department study², the typical Indian Country police department has no more than three and as few as one officer patrolling an area the size of Delaware.

The same DOJ study found that inadequate funding is "an important obstacle to good policing in Indian Country." Because the violent crime rate in Indian Country is more than double the national average, we should compare our police coverage with large urban areas with high violent crime rates. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, cities like Baltimore, Detroit, and Washington have police-to-citizen ratios of 3.9 to 6.6 officers per 1,000 residents. On the other hand, virtually no tribal police department has more than two officers per thousand residents.

² U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, *Policing on American Indian Reservations*, September 2001.

Given that the Justice Department itself published a study that justifies the need to increase resources for Indian Country law enforcement, it is unfortunate that tribal law enforcement programs have either lost funding or at best retained level funding since FY 2002. The President's budget would cut \$5 million in tribal law enforcement personnel funds allocated by the COPS program. Tribal Jail Construction is slated to lose \$14 million, dwindling to a mere \$10 million.³ We strongly oppose these cuts, and request an increase to the FY 2002 funding levels for Indian Country law enforcement programs.

ENVIRONMENT

The air we breathe, the water we drink, and the land on which we live are of the utmost importance to American Indian and Alaska Native culture and tradition. Tribal environmental program managers rightly perceive the Environmental Protection Agency's General Assistance Programs (GAP) as the primary federal mechanism available to protect our valuable land. GAP activities provide tribes with the resources needed to build capacity for EPA-delegated environmental programs. Although the Administration has requested a \$5 million increase for GAP grants, NCAI identifies need for an additional \$10 million in order for tribes to continue to develop their environmental management infrastructure capability.

HOMELAND SECURITY

The President has set the total budget of the Department of Homeland Security for FY 2004 at \$36.2 billion, an \$8 billion increase over FY 2003 levels. DHS programs and funding are directed to states, excluding tribal territories and leaving gaping vulnerabilities in our nation's homeland security. Tribal governments oversee many of the national features that DHS is designed to protect, from border security programs to critical infrastructure such as nuclear power plants and railroads. In order to employ a comprehensive homeland security strategy, tribes must be designated as recipients for DHS funding.

³ The FY 2004 request transfers tribal Jail Construction responsibility from the Justice Department to the BIA, ultimately allocating \$10 million to this activity.

HOUSING

Rural Housing and Economic Development. We are disappointed to see that the Rural Housing and Economic Development program has been zeroed out in the proposed FY04 budget. As you know, tribal populations are overwhelmingly rural. This program is very useful to tribes, which have tapped into funds for critical economic programs that are the lifelines for their communities. The capacity-building aspect of the RHED program has provided tribes with vital resources to implement good-governance practices. We would like to see funding for the Rural Housing and Economic Development program restored to \$25 million.

Drug Elimination Program. This budget has, for the third year, left the Drug Elimination Program unfunded. These grants were critical for tribal police forces, which are facing an ever-increasing drug problem on their reservations. We urge you to restore funding to FY2001 levels of \$310 million.

TREASURY

Within the Treasury budget, the Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) fund's tribal program has served as a very helpful resource for tribes. We support continued funding of the CDFI.

COMMERCE

Office of Native American Business Development. As you know, NCAI has compiled an economic stimulus proposal for Indian country. In conjunction with this initiative, we see a great need for Indian economies to be part of the Department of Commerce's daily processes. The Economic Development Administration has taken interest in tribal communities, as the Census Bureau has, but tribal economies have not been prioritized by the Department as a whole. We ask that the Office of Native American Business Development—an office that was created **four** years ago—be filled immediately. This office must be created *within the office of the Secretary* in order to create a link between

tribes and the Department to provide a foundation for relationship-building in the future. We ask that you urge the Secretary of Commerce to fund and fill the Office of Native American Business Development as soon as possible.

Census Bureau. The Census bureau has consistently demonstrated a commitment to Indian tribes, and they recognize the importance of data to us as we govern our communities. We would like to see support for the Bureau maintained at last year's level of \$705 million, with explicit support for the American Community Survey, which not only provide timely information for you here in the federal government, but will give *our* governments the information we need to serve the changing needs of our citizens.

Economic Development Administration. The Economic Development Administration has created opportunities for tribes as well. Pursuant to NCAI resolution BIS-02-007, we ask that funding for the EDA be increased to \$500 million so that they can provide increased financial assistance to tribal economic development and planning projects.

Small Business Administration. The Office of Native American Affairs at SBA has been working well with Indian owned businesses, and has expanded the network of 8(a) certified businesses greatly. We would like to see support for creation of Native American Business Development Centers and expansion of tribal Business Information Centers within the SBA.

TRANSPORTATION

We have several specific suggestions for improvements to funding mechanisms for transportation programs within the BIA. First, we would like an addition to the budget that would hold the IRR program harmless from the obligation limitation. Particularly with this year's low gas tax receipts, the IRR program will be hit hard, losing up to \$40 million or more to this obligation. Our yearly appropriation is only \$275 million, and as a result the obligation limitation has a greater effect on the IRR program that it does on significantly larger state budgets. The level of need in Indian country is great, with a backlog of \$20 *billion* for construction and maintenance according to the BIA. With such a

glaring need, we request an offset of the obligation and limitation to allow tribes to continue critical upgrades and maintenance of their infrastructure.

We also request funds for tribes to implement planning activities. Without adequate planning, roads and bridges can't be built. However, most tribes do not receive enough funds to both plan and construct or maintain their transportation facilities. We request that \$14 million be allocated on top of IRR appropriations to give each tribe a minimum of \$25,000 for planning activities if their 2% planning allocation is below that level. This will allow even small tribes to plan and construct an adequate infrastructure.

AGRICULTURE

American Indian Livestock Feed Program. NCAI is very disappointed to see that President's Agriculture budget slashes all funding for the American Indian Livestock Feed Program. This elimination in funding comes at a critical time for Native ranchers, who have weathered five years of drought and the forced sale of Indian livestock. NCAI and the Intertribal Agricultural Council ask Congress to restore funding to this valuable program at a level of \$15 million in order to adequately address the current need of Indian livestock producers that utilize the 46 million acres of trust land.

Extension Indian Reservation Program. The Extension Indian Reservation Program (EIRP) has provided agriculture education and 4-H Youth programs on twenty-eight reservations. This program has met great success in accomplishing its goals, yet has retained static funding for the past three fiscal years. NCAI and the Intertribal Agricultural Council request that funding for this program increase from \$5 million to \$10 million in FY 2004, so that the proven benefits of this program can be extended to additional reservations.

WATER DISTRIBUTION PROJECTS

The Department of Interior budget for FY 2004 provides virtually no funding for the many water projects so vital to development in western states. Many western tribes are dependent on rural water distribution projects that bring

needed quality drinking water to outlying areas. Tribes along the Missouri lost more than 500,000 acres of lands along the river when dams were built in the 1950's for the purpose of flood relief, electricity generation, and managing downstream navigation needs, among other purposes. Tribal Nations whose homelands were flooded were promised good drinking water from the reservoir created, called Lake Sakakawea in honor of the guide for the Lewis and Clark Expedition whose bicentennial was honored in an event at Monticello earlier this year.

Yet, 200 years after that expedition, over 300 of our members are still hauling water to their homes. The promises of the water from the Missouri have not been realized. Now, 50 years after the dams were built, further delay is simply not acceptable. These are not "pork barrel" projects, they are essential to tribes' livelihood, well-being, and economic future. The projects include, among others, the Dakota Water Resources Act (DWRA), which benefits the four tribes in North Dakota, and the Mni Wiconi project in South Dakota, benefiting the Oglala Lakota Tribe. Projects for which the engineering studies have been done are ready for construction in North Dakota and should have at least \$50 million appropriated under the DWRA annually to fulfill the commitment made to tribes.

CULTURAL PROTECTION

Funds should be provided within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) operations and maintenance budget or in alternative funding pools within the Department of Interior's budget to make sure American Indian and Alaska Native cultural sites on federal lands are protected. This is particularly an issue for tribes along the Missouri river who have many cultural sites now on USACE lands that were taken for the construction of reservoirs. The Lewis and Clark Expedition Bicentennial will bring millions of new tourists to tribal lands in this region—yet almost no funds have been appropriated for protection of our sites along the Missouri or elsewhere along the Lewis and Clark Trail which stretches through more than a dozen states. We urge Congress to appropriate the funds needed for protection of such sites. An estimated \$77 million is needed to protect sites along the Missouri.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for this opportunity to present written testimony regarding the President's FY 2004 budget request for Indian programs. The National Congress of American Indians calls upon Congress to fulfill the federal government's fiduciary duty to American Indians and Alaska Native people. This responsibility should never be compromised or diminished because of any political agenda or budget cut scenario. Tribes throughout the nation relinquished their lands and in return received a trust obligation, and we ask that Congress to maintain this solemn obligation to Indian Country and continue to assist tribal governments as we build strong, diverse, and healthy nations for our people.