



SUPPORT FOR TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS

Ensuring tribes have the tools for effective governance is critical to fulfilling the promise of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act. Key funding mechanisms that support Indian self-determination are steady tribal base funding, direct funding to tribes as opposed to grant or state pass through funding, and accurate data for policy-making, redistricting, and governance.

Key Recommendations

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Interior – Environment Appropriations Bill

Bureau of Indian Affairs

- *Fully fund Fixed Costs and Tribal Pay Costs.*

Most federal agencies receive annual increases to their Fixed Costs rates each year to address inflationary costs associated with Fringe Benefits and Pay Costs. Historically, tribes have been disadvantaged because they have never received Fringe Benefit Fixed Cost adjustments. Previous Administrations have only partially funded Pay Costs. Partially funding or failing to fund Pay Costs for tribes has devastated tribal communities by causing critical job losses. Over 900 tribal jobs have been lost and an estimated 300 more jobs will be permanently lost on an annual basis if 100 percent Pay Costs are not provided. The tribal losses are being further exacerbated by recent projections of costs that have been significantly underestimated. The Administration should include this in their Budget Request to prevent further erosion of jobs in tribal communities.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Interior – Environment Appropriations Bill

Bureau of Indian Affairs

- *Provide increases via tribal base funding instead of through grants to tribal governments.*

Grant funding, particularly inside the BIA, is not consistent with the intent of Indian self-determination. Tribal leaders have grown increasingly frustrated by the increase in Indian Affairs funding offered through grants. Allocating new funds via grant opportunities marginalizes and impedes the exercise of tribal self-determination. New BIA funding should be distributed via formulas developed through consultation with all tribes. When tribes are forced to apply for funding through grant opportunities at BIA, the ultimate result is that federal employees in Washington, DC, not elected tribal leaders, retain program authority. Grants limit the flexibility and local control authorities available to tribes under the Indian Self-Determination Act. Moreover, Congress has historically underfunded programs intended to benefit American Indians and Alaska Natives, with current figures estimating that BIA programs are underfunded by about a billion dollars when compared to need.²⁰ The funding vehicle used should be one that tribes choose because forcing the use of traditional grant mechanisms appears inconsistent with the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

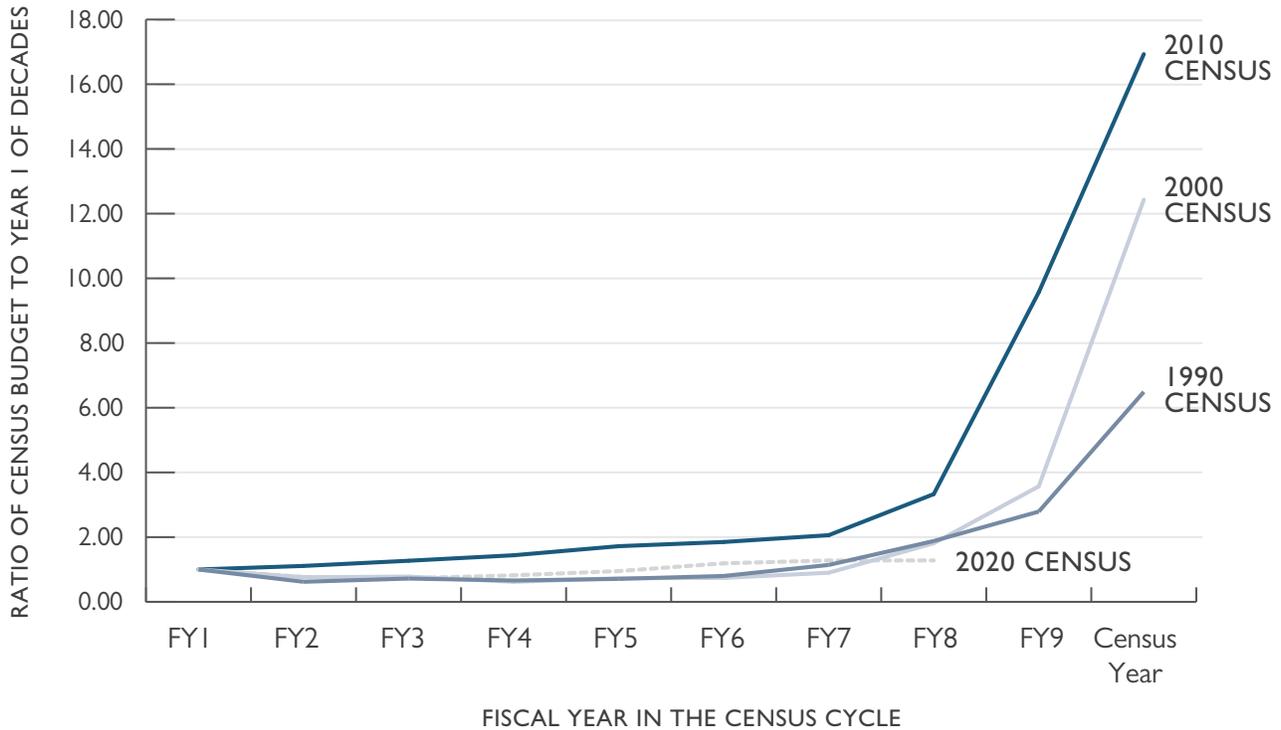
Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Bill

- *Census Bureau and the 2020 Census*

The U.S. population is enumerated every 10 years and census data are used to allocate Congressional seats, electoral votes, and is the basis for funding allocations for federally funded programs. Federal funding for Indian schools, Indian education programs, Indian health programs, Indian housing programs, water and sewage projects, roads and economic development are based on data collected by the Census Bureau every ten (10) years. The allocation of congressional seats across the United States are directly tied to data collected by the U.S. Census. Public Law No. 94-171 data is used for redistricting at the federal, state, and local levels and an accurate count is necessary to ensure that American Indian and Alaska Native voters have an equal voice in the political process of non-tribal elections.

However, in the 2010 Census, the Census Bureau estimates that American Indians and Alaska Natives living on reservations or in Native villages were undercounted by approximately 4.9 percent, more than double the undercount rate of the next closest population group. Additionally, uncertainty about FY 2017 funding levels and lack of appropriations resulted in the Census Bureau canceling planned field tests on the Standing Rock Reservation in North and South Dakota and the Colville Reservation and Off-Reservation Trust land in Washington State, which eliminated critical testing of methods for the 2020 Census for counting people in tribal areas lacking street addresses, testing methods of making in-person counts in Native households, and determining where and how to use oversampling to counteract the undercount facing Native people living on reservations and in Native villages. Inadequate funding has compelled the Census Bureau to announce “pauses” and modifications for key 2020 Census activities, which could greatly diminish the Bureau’s ability to take an accurate, cost-effective census and is expected to increase the disproportionate undercount of American Indian and Alaska Natives, especially those living in rural, low-income, geographically isolated, and/or linguistically isolated households.

Figure 4: Spending During Four Census Decades



Source: The Census Project. Census 2020 is at the bottom. Data Sources: Congressional Research Service, Courtesy Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney, D-NY. Final FY2017 appropriation as passed. FY2018 level reflects the impact of the short term Continuing Resolution as signed by the President on September 8, 2017 with funding through December 8, 2017.

The Census Bureau generally ramps up for the decennial count with a decade-long cycle of spending. The Census Project modeled this cycle by comparing spending each year relative to each decade’s first year (see Figure 4).²¹ Generally, Census budgets rise in preparation for address canvassing in the eighth year from year one (i.e. 1988 before the 1990 Census), then Census operations begin in the ninth year, culminating in the Census year with spending at between 6 and 16 times the amount as in year one. The ninth and tenth year of a decennial census cycle should see expected increases to address operations for an accurate count of the population.

NCAI supports the Census Bureau and the resources it needs and such supplemental appropriations as may be needed to meet updated cost projections for the 2020 Census and other Census programs, including the American Community Survey (ACS), the Current Population Survey (CPS), Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), and Small Area Health Insurance Estimates (SAHIE), which are critical to American Indians and Alaska Natives.

NCAI also supports restoration of the cancelled field tests on Tribal Lands and other testing, public education, and programs in preparation for the 2020 Census to ensure that American Indians and Alaska Natives are fully and accurately counted.

GOVERNMENT-WIDE

Promise Zones

- *Extend Promise Zone preference points to all Federal competitive grant programs in all Federal agencies and support Promise Zone tax incentives that stimulate growth and investments in Promise Zone communities, such as tax credits for hiring workers and incentives for capital investment within the Promise Zones.*

The Promise Zone is an initiative that targets Federal assistance to local service providers in impoverished urban, rural, and tribal communities to boost economic activity and job growth, improve educational opportunities, reduce crime, and leverage private investment to improve the quality of life in these areas.

The Promise Zone initiative is having a positive and lasting impact on tribal communities. To-date there are five tribal Promise Zone designations including the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, the Spokane Tribe of Indians, and the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians and Spirit Lake Nation through a joint designation. At Choctaw Nation, the Promise Zone initiative has helped to obtain federal funding from nation-wide competitive programs that are not focused on tribal communities (e.g., Internet access and work-force training). The Spokane Tribe of Washington was able to install solar panels on residential homes and train tribal members in renewable energy installation. However, because not all Federal agencies have provided preference points for their competitive grant applications, tribal designees are limited in their work.

To support and expand the benefits of the Promise Zone initiative to tribal communities, NCAI urges Congress to expand Promise Zone preference points to all competitive grant programs across all Federal agencies and increase their support for Promise Zone tax incentives that promote job creation. This will ensure that Native Americans living in both rural and urban Promise Zones have increased opportunities for employment, education, improved housing, and health care.