

REN-19-040: Support for Bureau of Indian Education School Construction Funding Increases and Innovation

Sponsor: Aaron Payment, Chairperson, Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians

Summary:

- The Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) oversees a total of 183 elementary, secondary, residential, and peripheral dormitories across 23 states.
- In 2017, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported that according to Bureau of Indian Affairs data, approximately one-third of BIE schools are still in poor condition, resulting in thousands of students being educated or housed in unsafe facilities.
- REN-19-040 urges Congress and the Administration to work with tribal nations to develop additional innovative models of funding for BIE school construction and related infrastructure, provided that new funding sources or methods must supplement and not supplant existing funding methods.

Issue:

BIE serves approximately eight percent of Native youth, with the majority of Native youth attending public schools. During the 2018-2019 school year, BIE-funded schools served approximately 47,000 individual K-12 American Indian students and residential boarders. As of the end of Quarter 2 of FY 2019, the total identified deferred maintenance for education facilities was \$639 million.

In 2009, Congress passed H.R. 1, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), allocating \$200,000,000 for calendar year 2009 and \$200,000,000 for calendar year 2010 in tax credit bonds for purpose of construction, rehabilitation, and repair of schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. However, no tribal nations were able to utilize the ARRA tax credit bonds due to a lack of capital outlay and an escrow account to support the issuance of school modernization bonds.

Other methods of funding have been proposed by Congress and the Administration, such as the Administration's FY 2020 budget request which proposed to invest \$6.5 billion over five years into a Public Lands Infrastructure Fund supported by the deposit of 50 percent of all federal energy development revenue to reduce the deferred maintenance backlog of Interior facilities. In addition, the Gila River Indian Community in Arizona, working alongside Congress and the Department of the Interior, has developed a school construction/lease-back contract.

Action:

REN-19-040 urges Congress and the Administration to increase funding for BIE school infrastructure, construction, and repair; work with tribal nations to ensure avenues exist in which tribal schools are given access to adequate construction funding; and develop additional innovative models of funding for BIE school construction and related infrastructure, provided that new funding sources or methods supplement and not supplant existing funding methods.

For additional information, please contact Jacob Schellinger at jschellinger@ncai.org or Nicholas Courtney at ncourtney@ncai.org.

Resolution Action Plan: REN-19-040

Title: Supporting Bureau of Indian Education School Construction Funding Increases and Innovation

Sponsor: Chairman Aaron Payment, Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians

Action Plan:

- 30 Days:
 - Staff will review pertinent legislation related to resolution subject area.
 - Contact resolution sponsor to coordinate requested assistance.
 - Strategize with other tribal nations, organizations, and representatives to work on BIE school construction funding innovation methods.
- 60 Days:
 - Prepare advocacy materials for congressional members and administration staff on the importance of education construction funding for BIE schools.
 - Schedule Hill and Administration visits to educate staff on the importance of education construction funding for BIE schools.
- 90 Days:
 - Prepare update for NCAI Annual Convention.
- 120 Days:
 - Continue Hill visits and follow discussions, hearings, and Hill activity pertaining to school construction funding.