



# Telecommunications

As the United States progresses with the deployment and adoption of 21st Century technologies, mechanisms implemented must take into consideration the unique circumstances that exist on tribal lands. As new policy initiatives spur robust, high-speed broadband services throughout the country, adequate resources and funding for these efforts will need to keep pace. Policies focused on the deployment and adoption of these new technologies provide renewed opportunities for tribes to exert self-determination and advance capacity building. Funding for federal commitments to consult with tribal nations and access to public media systems continue to be essential functions for bridging the Digital Divide in Indian Country.

## Key Recommendations

### Federal Communications Commission (FCC)

#### Financial Services Appropriations Bill

##### Office of Native Affairs and Policy

- *Provide a permanent fixed annual budget of \$500,000 to fund the Office of Native Affairs and Policy.*

Since 2010, the FCC, Office of Native Affairs and Policy (FCC-ONAP) has held consultations, trainings, and provided vital technical assistance throughout Indian Country that has resulted in tribal inclusion in FCC rulemakings at unprecedented levels. Through this tribal engagement, the FCC has revamped regulations to assist in bridging the Digital Divide on tribal lands. However, it was not until Congress passed the FY 2014 Omnibus that FCC-ONAP received \$300,000 to support its tribal consultation and training directives.

FCC-ONAP must continue to receive ongoing Fiscal Year funding to support the staffing levels necessary to routinely continue its consultation, training, technical assistance, and workshops throughout Indian Country. These meetings are vital to obtaining critical information regarding telecommunications issues affecting tribal lands and citizens. During this critical development phase of regulatory proceedings to support 21st Century broadband infrastructure, a dedicated annual budget of \$500,000 for FCC-ONAP is vital to facilitate meaningful and productive consultations with tribal governments.

## **FY 2018 Advance Appropriation (CPB/OMB Request)**

### **CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING (CPB)**

Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Bill

#### **Grant Programs**

- *Appropriate at least \$5 million to fund American Indian and Alaska Native radio stations.*
- *Appropriate at least \$1 million to Native Public Media and Koahnic Broadcast Corporation.*

In Indian Country, Native radio stations are essential to the tribal communities they serve since they are often the first source of emergency reporting and information. Public broadcasters use datacast technology for homeland security, public alert and warning systems, and public safety purposes. In Oklahoma, KCNP Chickasaw radio provided real time weather reports that saved lives during the 2013 tornado season. In Arizona, KUYI Hopi radio provides "House Calls," a health call-in show that connects listeners with a local doctor on questions about hanta virus, diabetes, HIV and other local health issues. In Alaska, KNBA covers news from Alaska Native villages about climate change refugees, language revitalization, and other hyper local stories important and relevant to Alaska Native communities. Often, the only place where Native stories and issues are heard, are on Native radio stations.

NCAI supported the Administration's request for \$445 million advance appropriation for CPB in Fiscal Year 2017, which was authorized in the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2015. Since 1976, CPB's two-year advance appropriation has served as a Congressional strategy to protect public media from any immediate political pressure. Community Service Grants (CSGs) account for approximately 70 percent of CPB's appropriation, which directly funds 1,300 local public television and radio stations including the 35 Native radio stations.

CPB also funds the essential system-wide station support services provided by Native Public Media, Inc., and content production and satellite programming distribution by Koahnic Broadcast Corporation. Access to these funds allows Native Public Media, Inc., to ensure that Native radio stations stay on-air by maintaining compliance with FCC and other federal rules and regulations, and by providing the training and support Native broadcasters need.

NCAI supports an FY 2018 advance appropriation of \$5 million in CPB funding for the 35 CPB qualified Native radio stations serving federally recognized American Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Villages; and an FY 2018 advance appropriation of \$1 million for Native Public Media and Koahnic Broadcast Corporation for technical support services to Native radio stations.