

# Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2021 Highlights

(Note: Numbers are nationwide program funding levels.)

## Addressing Safety and Responding to Disasters

- **Wildfire Prevention and Suppression:** Provides a total of \$5 billion in wildland fire management funding, which includes \$2.35 billion in wildfire suppression funding from the fire cap adjustment for the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior. A more than \$50 million total increase is provided to the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior for hazardous fuels reduction activities to help reduce the risk of wildfires.
- **3D Alaska Mapping:** Maintains funding for Alaska mapping initiatives at \$7.7 million, which includes modernizing Alaskan hydrography, topography, and imagery datasets, enhancing safety for activities such as aviation.
- **USGS Earthquake, Volcano, and Landslide Hazards:** Provides funding for Alaska to develop and enhance earthquake monitoring capabilities, as well as operational funding to upgrade volcano monitoring equipment. Additionally, the bill provides funding for a site-specific landslide hazard assessment and a long-term monitoring strategy in Prince William Sound.

## Prioritizing Public Safety and Justice

- **Missing, Trafficked, & Murdered Indigenous Women:** In order to improve the federal response to the epidemic of missing, trafficked, and murdered indigenous women, an additional \$6.7 million is included for the BIA to continue to address these issues. Specifically, the bill includes \$2 million for cold case work, \$1 million for equipment needs, \$3 million to support the goals of “Operation Lady Justice”, and \$750,000 for victim witness specialists. The bill also continues language of the need to boost both coordination and data collection among Tribal, local, state, and federal law enforcement by directing BIA to designate an official within the agency to work with Tribes to develop a set of guidelines on how to best collect statistics. Native American women face high rates of violence and the lack of data on the number of women and girls who go missing or murdered further complicates the Nation’s ability to address this crisis.
- **Domestic Violence Prevention Initiative:** Includes an additional \$1 million for an IHS initiative that promotes culturally appropriate prevention and treatment approaches to domestic and sexual violence from a community-driven context. This includes funding

projects that provide victim advocacy, intervention, case coordination, policy development, community response teams, sexual assault examiner programs, and community and school education programs. The Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation, Chugachmiut, Copper River Native Association, Kodiak Area Native Association, Maniilaq Association, Norton Sound Health Corporation, Southcentral Foundation, and Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium all receive funds through this initiative to continue efforts in addressing domestic violence and sexual assault in their communities.

- **Tribal Court Funding (PL280):** Includes an additional \$1 million in funding to Public Law 280 states, such as Alaska, in order to help develop tribal court systems for communities.
- **Violence Against Women Act (VAWA):** Maintains \$3 million for training and specific VAWA tribal court needs.
- **Small and Needy Tribes:** Maintains funding of \$5 million in funding to ensure all tribes have a base level of support to run tribal governments. Almost 90 percent of national funding goes to Alaska.
- **Tiwahe Initiative:** Maintains funding for the program to help communities design a comprehensive approach for the delivery of social services and justice programs. The Emmonak Women's shelter receives funding through this program.

### **Investing in Communities and Economic Opportunities**

- **Payment in Lieu of Taxes:** Provides full funding at \$515 million for the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program. The PILT program provides monetary compensation to local governments throughout Alaska that contain federal lands that are not subject to state or local taxation. The revenue helps local governments provide vital services, such as firefighting and police protection, construction of public schools and roads, and search-and-rescue operations.
- **Arctic Priorities:** Supports the Arctic Council and directs the Fish and Wildlife Service to focus on economic opportunities in the region, as well as science and subsistence issues.
- **Increasing Public Access:** Invests in Forests Service recreation access programs to improve the Forest Service's capacity to maintain recreation sites like cabins, trails, and campgrounds, and to help expand recreation-based businesses in the Chugach and Tongass National Forests.

- **Alaska Red Cedar and Economic Timber Sales:** Continues current law that requires that timber sales in Alaska be economic, and requires that Alaska and West Coast sawmills be given the first right to process the timber, in order to keep these jobs in the United States.
- **Timber Industry in Alaska:** Dedicating resources critical to programs that support jobs and opportunities in the timber industry in Southeast Alaska. Also notes the harm the retaliatory Chinese tariffs are having on the Alaska timber industry and encourages the Department of Agriculture to consider including domestic timber products on the list of agriculture commodities covered for tariff relief.
- **Mineral Resources and Critical Minerals Programs:** Works to strengthen America's mineral security by continuing support for resource management agencies to continue the Outer Continental Shelf critical minerals inventory. Includes \$10.5 million for a critical minerals initiative that will improve topographic, geological, and geophysical mapping, in order to identify domestic deposits of critical minerals. For the Mineral Resources Program, which includes assessments of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, \$4 million is provided.

### **Protecting Land, Improving Access, and Supporting Recreation**

- **National Parks:** Invests in infrastructure improvements on federal lands and provides the National Park Service with an additional \$100 million to address critical operations in our nation's parks.
- **Denali National Park Road:** Requires National Park Service to provide a long-term plan for addressing road improvements at Polychrome Pass.
- **Forest Inventory Analysis:** Includes funding required to partner with states to inventory forests across the nation, including interior Alaska. This information provides the State with important information about the condition of Alaska's forested lands, and dovetails into funding made available for education and management of Spruce bark beetle infestations that threaten Alaska communities with greater risk of devastating wildfires.
- **Contaminated Lands:** Dozens of exploration wells and core tests that were drilled decades ago remain abandoned in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. This bill provides funding for legacy well cleanup, and the report further directs the Bureau of Land Management to craft a long-term funding plan to complete the clean-up of the wells within ten years. Also the report directs BLM to coordinate with all responsible federal agencies to implement a long-term solution to comprehensive cleanup of contaminated Alaska Native lands.

- **Alaska Land Conveyance:** The bill includes \$25.8 million, an increase of \$3 million, for the Alaska Land Conveyance Program. This funding serves to fulfill requirements to transfer lands to the State and Native Alaskans under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) and to help with implementation of the Alaska Native Vietnam Era Veterans Land Allotment program.
- **Invasive Species:** Provides continued support for programs that will help combat and eradicate species like elodea and Northern pike that threaten Alaska's waters.

### **Improving Air Quality, Protecting Watersheds, Investing in Infrastructure**

- **Targeted Airshed Grants:** Increases funding to \$59 million to ensure that cities like Fairbanks are eligible for grants to support wood stove change-outs in order to help reduce air pollution.
- **Small Remote Incinerators:** A provision is included to prohibit the EPA from implementing its small, remote incinerators rule in Alaska while Alaskans work with the EPA to develop a rule that will work better to address Alaska's rural, unique needs.
- **Transboundary Water Quality:** Allocates increased funding to \$3 million for addressing transboundary water river quality, specifically for stream gauges and a water quality baseline strategy. Also directs the U.S. Geological Survey to work cooperatively with local tribes, stakeholders, and other federal agencies necessary to help develop a water quality strategy for transboundary rivers.
- **Bristol Bay:** Funding is included to conduct preliminary appraisal and valuation related to potential future land acquisitions in the Bristol Bay ecosystem.
- **PFAS Contaminants:** Across the bill, \$55.9 million in funding is called out for work relating to addressing PFAS and PFAS contamination. Of this amount, \$20 million is provided to EPA grant programs to support state remediation efforts of PFAS and other emerging contaminants and an additional \$2.9 million is made available in USGS for testing and mapping of PFAS contamination.
- **Alaska Native Villages Water Program:** Increases funding to \$36.2 million for the construction of new drinking water and wastewater systems, or the improvement of existing systems in rural Alaskan communities.

- **Assistance to Small and Disadvantaged Communities Water Program:** Provides \$26.4 million for a grant program to help bring basic water and sewer infrastructure to communities in need.
- **State Water Revolving Funds:** Maintains funding for the Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water State Revolving Funds at \$2.76 billion, to help facilitate clean, safe drinking water in local communities. Funds can be used to address drinking water and wastewater infrastructure challenges, including addressing problems like lead content in water.
- **Sanitation Facilities Construction:** Provides \$3 million for technical assistance, training, and guidance to sanitation operators and communities regarding the operation and maintenance of water supply and sewage disposal facilities.

### **Reducing Regulatory Burdens and Unnecessary Spending**

- **Lead Bullets and Fishing Tackle:** Continues to prohibit the EPA from regulating lead content of ammunition and fishing tackle.
- **Fish Grinding:** Directs the EPA to address a longstanding issue of unworkable standards for grinding of fish waste by instructing the agency to develop a policy to treat onshore seafood processors who use the best available technology as in compliance.
- **Chitosan:** Directs the EPA to complete its review and add chitosan—a compound derived from crab and fish byproducts that’s regulated as a pesticide—to the Minimum Risk Pesticide List. This would help reduce the regulatory burden on Alaskan companies producing chitosan.
- **Kagalaska and Chirikof:** Prohibits the Fish and Wildlife Service from using funds to conduct a costly caribou hunt on Kagalaska Island in the Aleutian Chain. The legislation also prohibits costly and impractical efforts to remove cattle from the remote Chirikof Island.

### **Prioritizing Health and Wellness**

- **Native Children’s Commission:** The bill provides \$500,000 for the Commission on Native Children created to identify the complex challenges facing Native children in Alaska and across the country by conducting an intensive study on issues such as high rates of poverty, unemployment, child abuse, domestic violence, crime, substance abuse, and dire economic opportunities. Senator Murkowski, along with former Senator Heitkamp of North Dakota, sponsored legislation creating the Commission.

- **Community Health Aids:** Maintains funding for the Community Health Aid Program (CHAP) at current funding levels for the existing program and includes \$2 million for dental health therapist training program that trains students in Alaska, Washington, Idaho, and Oregon. CHAP is a multidisciplinary system of behavioral, community, and dental health professionals working alongside licensed providers to offer patients increased access to quality care in rural Alaska. The bill encourages the Indian Health Service (IHS) to look at programs which can help educate community health aides on trauma informed care and collecting medical evidence, which has the potential to help communities address the crisis of missing, trafficked, and murdered indigenous women.
- **Tribal Clinic Operational Costs:** Funding maintained for Village-Built Clinics (VBCs) — the VBC program is unique to Alaska and supports 150 healthcare clinics in rural areas which often serve as the only health facility in their respective regions. A new indefinite appropriation account is created for tribal lease payments.
- **Small Ambulatory Clinics:** Maintains a total of \$25 million, to make infrastructure improvements across the nation for providing healthcare delivery to American Indians and Alaska Natives. Grants have previously been provided to Shishmaref, Ninilchik, Kongiganak Village, Tok, and Tatitlek.
- **Zero Suicide Initiative:** Maintains funding at \$3.6 million for an IHS program aimed at preventing suicide by providing tools and support for organizations with patients receiving care.
- **Alcohol and Substance Abuse:** Provides \$251 million, a \$5.7 million increase, to IHS alcohol and substance abuse prevention programs, to focus on tribal youth and the incorporation of more holistic healthcare models. Programs within tribal communities to combat alcohol and substance abuse include inpatient and outpatient treatment, and rehabilitation services in both urban and rural settings.
- **Mental Health:** Provides a \$5 million increase for mental health and continues important programs for the behavioral health integration initiative, for suicide prevention, and for the Telebehavioral Health Center of Excellence. Together these programs help facilitate integrated approaches between medical care, behavioral health, and tribal community organizations, in order to provide the entire spectrum of preventative care to improve outcomes in mental health, substance abuse, and physical ailments.
- **Contract Support Costs:** Fully funds contract support costs, the operational and overhead costs in the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Indian Health Service (IHS), to ensure tribes have the necessary resources they need to deliver programs and services. This is

especially important to Alaska because all healthcare for Alaska Natives is directly provided by tribal organizations. The account is continued as an indefinite appropriation so that if estimates made by the respective agencies are too low, funds are available to pay these costs without taking funds from other programs which reduce their capacity.

- **New Initiatives:** Provides \$5 million for individual new initiatives to help support maternal health, Alzheimer's, and Hepatitis C/HIV.

## **Supporting Subsistence and Fisheries Management**

- **Alaska Subsistence:** Provides over \$14 million in funding for the Forest Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service to conduct activities relating to the Federal Subsistence Board, and collaborates with Alaska Natives to gather information, expand employment and capacity building, and assist subsistence users with law enforcement compliance activities, such as obtaining essential permits and meeting harvest reporting requirements.
- **Tribal Management:** Provides \$13 million for subsistence programs, extending critical pilot projects and ensuring additional opportunities for Alaska Native involvement in federal subsistence processes. Also continues support for subsistence pilot projects.
- **Polar Bear Co-Management:** Directs the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to work and engage in meaningful consultation with Alaska Natives for their subsistence use of polar bears, including consulting with and incorporating the views of Kaktovik residents in its decisions related to polar bear tourism. Also encourages the FWS to explore co-management of the Beaufort polar bear population with Alaska Natives in region.
- **Pacific Salmon Treaty:** Provides \$9.9 million for implementation of the Pacific Salmon Treaty. The Pacific Salmon Treaty allows for the bilateral, cooperative management of Pacific salmon between the United States and Canada, supporting commercial and subsistence fisheries in Alaska.

## **Investing in Culture and the Arts**

- **National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH):** Increase of \$5.2 million is provided to each endowment to support the arts through NEA and NEH. This includes support for the NEA's Healing Arts Program, developed by the NEA and the Department of Defense (DoD) to help our nation's wounded and injured service members and their families in their transition into civilian life.

- **Cultural Arts:** Continues funding for an arts and cultural program with Sealaska and the Institute of American Indian and Alaskan Native Culture and Arts Development.
- **Native Language Immersion:** New last year, continues \$3 million in BIA for native language immersion grants for states that do not have Bureau of Indian Education funded schools.
- **Native Handicrafts:** Encourages the Fish and Wildlife Service to do more to ensure that native handicrafts can continue to be sold and increases funding to combat violations of the Indian Arts and Crafts Act.
- **Sealaska Cultural Sites:** Maintains funding of \$450,000 for Alaska Native programs to certify claims for historical places and cultural sites.

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