



Congress of the United States House of Representatives

March 27, 2020

The Honorable Steve Mnuchin
Secretary of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Secretary Mnuchin:

Thank you for your efforts to include tribal provisions and funding priorities in the most recent legislation passed by Congress. The third stimulus package includes historic levels of funding for tribes and brings unprecedented parity to tribal government and state and local governments. Without you, and the President's support for Indian Country, these achievements would not have been possible.

We want to be sure the broad and sweeping language of the statute giving you authority to disburse grants directly to tribes is used to allocate funds in a swift and transparent manner. Almost by definition, expenses tribal governments are paying for employees on paid leave and any expanded benefits such as waived health insurance copays and deductibles and more generous formularies are new and different from those expenses incurred in prior year. In addition, liquidating tribal long-term investments in financial instruments to pay for these paid leave expenses and to maintain benefits and services provided to tribal citizens also is a new expense different from those incurred earlier. Tribal governments are doing their communities and the nation a great service by keeping employees on paid leave and continuing to fund benefits and services to citizens that the federal government is treaty bound to fund but often does not. The alternative is unthinkable—tribes forced to lay off employees and slash benefits and services to vulnerable populations because their revenue source has been entirely cut off by the effects of the corona virus.

While there are many advancements for tribal governments in this bill, we know from past handlings of stimulus packages that getting the funds to the communities that need them sometimes are delayed and often too late to make the impact they were intended to make. Billions of dollars have been now been directed to Indian Country for health care access to economic stabilization funds.

In Oklahoma, many tribes participate in gaming facilities and employ nearly 30,000 direct employees statewide and paid over \$1 billion in wages, salaries, and tips in 2018. During this crisis, the tribes are continuing to pay their employees while forgoing any revenue while their operations are closed. The federal government has a unique trust and treaty obligation to tribes, and we urge the administration to release the funds allocated to tribes and tribal governments as soon as possible to equip them with the tools and resources to combat the effects COVID-19 has unleashed onto all our communities.

Again, thank you for your service through this historic pandemic that is facing our country and for your support of Indian Country. We must ensure that the First Americans are not the last Americans to receive the critical funds Congress has appropriated specifically for them. Please reach out to any of our offices if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

(Signed Electronically)

Tom Cole
Member of Congress

(Signed Electronically)

Frank Lucas
Member of Congress

(Signed Electronically)

Markwayne Mullin
Member of Congress

(Signed Electronically)

Kevin Hern
Member of Congress

(Signed Electronically)

Kendra Horn
Member of Congress

CC: David Bernhardt
Secretary
Department of the Interior