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**CARES Act provides \$8B in critical assistance for tribal governments**

WASHINGTON – The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, or CARES Act, signed into law by President Trump on Friday, March 27, provides critical relief for Indian Country to address the COVID-19 pandemic, including over \$500 million in direct appropriations to Indian Affairs and an unprecedented \$8 billion for tribes, according to a Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs release.

The \$8 billion will be allocated to tribal governments with eligible expenses through the Department of the Treasury, in consultation with the Department of the Interior and tribal governments. These consultations will help ensure that the funds will be allocated effectively to tribes most in need of critical aid.

Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Tara Sweeney said the CARES Act provides a critical infusion of supplemental funding for tribal communities. “Coupled with the nearly a half billion dollars in direct appropriations to Indian Affairs, the historic \$8 billion tribal set-aside will provide urgent financial assistance,” she said.

“I was proud to work with Michigan’s tribes to advance this much-needed support,” said Senator Gary Peters. “This legislation provides health care, nutrition and education assistance to help Michigan’s tribes mitigate this public health and economic crisis. I will continue to work with our tribes to ensure this assistance is received in a timely manner.”

Sault Tribe Chairperson Aaron Payment said, “Senators Peters and Stabenow are long time personal friends and stalwart supporters of Indian Country. Their work on the recently approved stimulus package will help Michigan citizens and tribes alike during the current World Wide Pandemic. More pointedly, Gary and Debbie partnered with me as tribal chairperson to ensure the needs of Indian Country were met in the final legislation including \$8 billion in recovery relief for American Indian Tribes.”

According to the release, the CARES Act provides \$453 million for essential services to help prepare for and respond to the pandemic, ensure continuation of government operations, and aid individual Native Americans. The legislation provides funding needed to support assistance to individuals facing loss of income, ensure law enforcement and detention center employees have necessary personal protective equipment, and implement required deep cleaning of facilities or quarantines as needed. The CARES Act also provides specific set-asides for health, housing and nutrition assistance programs that will be critical to supporting Indian Country during this time.

The legislation also provides \$69 million for education-related needs, including salaries, equipment, online curriculum development and other costs. To supplement the funds directly appropriated to Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), the CARES Act also provides support through the Education Stabilization Fund. In consultation with the Secretary of the Interior, the

legislation directs the Secretary of Education to allocate \$153.75 million to Interior for programs operated or funded by BIE, according to the release.

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