

Message on the 50th Anniversary of the Federal Policy of Indian Self-Determination
July 8, 2020

On July 8, 1970, President Richard M. Nixon issued his "Special Message to the Congress on Indian Affairs," which served to herald a new era in Federal Indian policy: Indian Self-Determination.

In his message, President Nixon applauded the adaptability and creativity of Native Americans in the face of overwhelming obstacles, praising their enormous contributions to our Nation through art, culture, resilience, and spirit, and embracing strong Tribal governments and respecting Tribal decisionmaking. Building on this momentum, Congress passed and President Ford signed into law the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA) of 1975, which recognized the primacy of the Nation-to-Nation relationship between the United States and Tribes and led to the establishment of an Indian civil service and a recognition of Tribal institutions through contracting and, later, compacting between the Federal Government and Tribes.

My administration has taken historic measures to build upon the legacy of the ISDEAA. In addition to signing the first-ever Presidential proclamation recognizing missing and murdered indigenous peoples, I was proud to sign an Executive order establishing both Operation Lady Justice and the Task Force on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives. These initiatives are developing and implementing an aggressive, Governmentwide strategy, working with Tribal leaders to combat the crisis of missing and murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives, especially women and children. In furtherance of these goals, in fiscal year 2019, the Department of Justice awarded over \$273.4 million in grants to improve public safety, serve victims of crime, and support youth programs in American Indian and Alaska Native communities. My administration is also delivering unprecedented resources to combat opioids and drug addiction to nurture healthy families and communities for all Americans.

My administration has also advanced important cultural priorities for Indian Country. This includes allowing Federally recognized Tribes to retain bald and golden eagle remains found on their land. Additionally, my administration reached an agreement with Finland to repatriate culturally important remains and artifacts to the Pueblos and other Tribes with heritage in the Mesa Verde region. We have also taken a whole-of-Government approach to enhancing coordination regarding economic growth, jobs, infrastructure, and improved standards of living in Indian Country, including elevating Federal Tribal energy development collaboration, hosting the first-ever Federal Tribal Broadband Summit, and continuing technical assistance to identify priorities, opportunities, and resources that improve connectivity for native communities. Additionally, the Department of Transportation recently published a final rule to establish the Tribal Transportation Self-Governance Program, which will remove regulatory burdens and provide a flexible, effective framework for the Federal Government and Tribes to work collaboratively to improve transportation infrastructure, economic growth, and quality of life in Indian Country.

In light of the coronavirus pandemic, the Department of the Treasury, in consultation with the Department of the Interior and Federally recognized Tribes, has disbursed nearly \$8 billion dollars from the CARES Act's Coronavirus Relief Fund to Tribal jurisdictions. This is the largest single investment in Indian Country in our Nation's history and is delivering critical resources to respond to and recover from the coronavirus. The Department of Health and Human Services, the Indian Health Service, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency also continue working in

close partnership with Tribal nations to deliver lifesaving and life-sustaining assistance and financial support, including \$500 million to Tribal health organizations from the Provider Relief Fund and \$30 million to Tribes for meals and home and community-based supportive services.

Today, as we commemorate the 50th anniversary of Indian self-determination, we commit ourselves anew to ensuring the sovereignty, strength, and health of Indian Tribes and Tribal citizens.

Categories: Letters and Messages : Indian self-determination, 50th anniversary of Federal policy, message.

Subjects: American Indians and Alaska Natives : Health care system, improvement efforts; American Indians and Alaska Natives : Tribal nations, relations with Federal Government; Diseases : Coronavirus, domestic prevention efforts; Holidays and special observances : Indian self-determination, 50th anniversary Federal policy; Homeland Security, Department of : Emergency Management Agency, Federal; Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives, Task Force on.

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