



Advance Appropriations

Recent uncertainties in the appropriations process caused by partisan policy differences have created an environment that has left some of our nation's most underserved citizens in precarious situations. The historical partial government shutdown experienced in 2019 which lasted 35 days severely limited governmental services provided to American Indian and Alaska Native people. Such delays contribute significantly to the challenges the Tribal Nations face when they seek to provide services to Tribal communities. For nearly two decades, there has been only one year when the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies budget, which contains the funding for IHS and BIA, has been enacted by the beginning of the fiscal year.

Funding delays make it very difficult for Tribal health providers to address the needs of their communities adequately. This problem is exacerbated when there is a lapse in appropriations and Tribes must rely on reserves or find alternate sources to finance federal programs. Congress can address this problem by authorizing advance appropriations for Indian programs. Advance appropriations are not a new concept. The Departments of Education, Housing and Urban Development, Labor, and Veterans Affairs currently have advance appropriations authority.

Below is a list of advance appropriations legislation that has been introduced so far in the 116th Congress:

H.R. 1128, the Indian Programs Advance Appropriations Act
H.R. 1135, the Indian Health Service Advance Appropriations Act
S. 229, the Indian Programs Advance Appropriations Act

Tribes should support and encourage Congress to enact the legislation listed above that would further efforts to:

-  Provide agencies authority to spend a certain amount of one or more fiscal years following the fiscal year for which the appropriations are provided
-  Mitigate the effects of Budget uncertainty created by continuing resolutions and government shutdowns
-  Ensure the continuity of services during shutdowns delivered by tribal and federal employees employed in law enforcement, health care, education, and other essential services provided to Indian Country
-  Aspire to fulfill the trust and treaty responsibilities to Indian Country during a shutdown or other forms of political impasse.