

DOI SELF-GOVERNANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

c/o Self-Governance Communication and Education

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June 17, 2019

The Honorable David Bernhardt, Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

RE: Establish a Department of the Interior Secretarial Tribal Advisory Committee

Dear Secretary Bernhardt,

On behalf of the Department of the Interior Self-Governance Advisory Committee (DOI-SGAC) I write to urge you to establish a Secretarial [level] Tribal Advisory Committee (STAC) to improve the Department of the Interior's government-to-government relationship with Tribal Nations by ensuring direct communication and coordination with top level Cabinet Officials. An Interior STAC will provide a forum where Tribal leadership can assist in the development of policies that better align with the fulfillment of the Department's Treaty and Trust obligations and more effectively guide the Administration in its dealings with Tribal Nations.

There are 573 Federally Recognized Tribal Nations each with their own culture, language, and history. Tribal leadership possess unique knowledge and skills about their communities and governmental operations that can provide an insightful perspective and a level of expertise that will aid in policy development. Tribal Leaders selected to serve on the STAC will make recommendations and provide key information for shaping policy directives that not only support Agency initiatives but that result in positive impacts at the Tribal community level. Assuring Tribal involvement at the outset of the process may also deter legislative or legal challenges to agency action after the fact.

An Interior STAC will ensure effective and efficient planning, monitoring, and strengthening of Tribal programs and services. Allowing Tribal stakeholders to assist in the development of policies for programs and services that are implemented at the local level ensures community buy-in. Tribal leadership will be held accountable for the decisions they make and policies they implement; therefore, they have a vested interest in ensuring program success. Strategic goals and objectives could be developed to support a unified vision that will establish both short-term achievements and long-term outcomes that will benefit the Agency and Tribal community. Tribal leaders will serve as liaisons between their communities and the Agency, and as advocates work to make sure that Congress fully understands the critical need to appropriate adequate resources to the Agency to effectively implement the shared mission and goals.

Selection of representatives to serve on the STAC should take into consideration the uniqueness of Tribes and the uniqueness of regions. The Agency should ensure broad representation of Indian country and Indian issues, similar to the Health and Human Services Secretary's Tribal Advisory Committee and established Department of the Interior Advisory Committees, such as, the Tribal Interior Budget Council (TIBC) and Self-Governance Advisory Committee (SGAC). Committee bylaws could be developed jointly to establish a clear purpose, structure, responsibilities, terms of service, succession and removal, official requirements and guidelines. We urge you to consider our request favorably and look forward to working with you to strengthen our partnership and capacity for long-term cooperation and collaboration.

Please feel free to contact me via email at rallen@jamestowntribe.org or by phone at 206-369-6699 should you have any concerns and/or questions.

Sincerely,



W. Ron Allen, Tribal Chairman/CEO Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe
Chairman, Self-Governance Advisory Committee

Cc: Tara Mac Lean Sweeney, AS-IA
Sharee Freeman, Director, Office of Self-Governance
SGAC and Technical Workgroup Members