

S. HRG. 119–151

**NOMINATION OF WILLIAM “BILLY” KIRKLAND
TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR INDIAN
AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE**

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

JULY 17, 2025

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**NOMINATION OF WILLIAM “BILLY” KIRKLAND
TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR INDIAN
AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

THURSDAY, JULY 17, 2025

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:50 p.m. in room 628, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Lisa Murkowski, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. LISA MURKOWSKI,
U.S. SENATOR FROM ALASKA**

The CHAIRMAN. Good afternoon. I will call this nomination hearing to order.

It should be noted that my Vice Chair is not here yet. We are in the midst of a series of five votes that have just kicked off. So we have already had to reschedule this nomination hearing for Mr. Kirkland once. We don't want to do that. This is an important position that we would like to be able to advance through our process.

So as members kind of hop in and hop out, we appreciate your indulgence, and please take that as no sign of disrespect or disinterest in the nominee and the position.

I want to welcome you, Mr. Kirkland. Thank you for your willingness to serve. Congratulations on your nomination. I appreciate the visit that we had a couple of weeks ago. I look forward to continuing conversation and dialogue today and then beyond.

The Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs is an important position at the Interior Department. Your job, if confirmed, will be to assist and support Secretary Burgum in fulfilling the United States' trust responsibility to the federally-recognized American Indians and Alaska Native tribes and individual Indian Trust beneficiaries across the Country.

This trust responsibility is the cornerstone of Federal Indian law and policy. It is the legal and moral basis for upholding tribal sovereignty and rights of self-governance of tribes. The trust management of over 55 million acres of Indian trust lands and the provision of basic social, financial and educational services for Native people, through three bureaus, Indian Affairs, Indian Education, and the Trust Fund's administration that you will lead.

So let that sink in for a minute. You probably have, and for all the people who are gathered here in this room who are here to sup-

port you, this is a big deal. The gravity of this responsibility is a big deal. You will be called upon to understand the challenges that American Indians and Alaska Natives face in our Country, and to work to provide solutions.

Your decision on matters for your office, whether approval of a land into trust application, Federal recognition of a tribe, a go-ahead on an energy development project or gaming operation, or the building of critical infrastructure such as housing, water or roads, they will matter. They will matter to the lives of Native people.

There are treaties, very unique laws to navigate, not to mention ongoing debates about education, economic empowerment, public safety and tribal jurisdiction. There are over 500 federally-recognized tribe to serve, with more than 200 of those in my home State of Alaska, all with different histories and cultures. The cliché that one size fits all does not reflect or fit Indian Country. I think we recognize that.

The job of Assistant Secretary is not an easy one. Right now, the department and the bureaus you would oversee are in a major flux. The workforce has been drastically reduced, nearly 20 percent according to the numbers that we have from the department. And the recent budget proposal for Indian Affairs programs is unserious, at best. I think we have to do better.

When we talked in my office, you described yourself as a strong conduit between Native people and their needs and the White House and the rest of the administration. I look forward to hearing more about how you can be a strong advocate for all Native peoples and how you will make their lives better.

We have a lot of issues to work on, but I just want to highlight a few here. First, and this was one that we had discussion about, but it is the probate backlog. Seven years. Seven years is absolutely too long to wait when a family risks losing their home simply because of the death of a parent or a grandparent.

We also have to speed up the relocation of Native villages that have been threatened by a changing climate. In Alaska, we have whole communities, I talk a lot about Newtok, some of the staff visited the river community of Huslia. They are literally falling into rivers, as Huslia is, or the ocean, as Newtok is. The survival of these villages depends on continuing and building on Federal assistance.

There are more than 1,000 contaminated sites on Native-owned lands that the Federal Government is legally responsible for cleaning up in Alaska. We need to eliminate this public health threat and be able to redevelop these lands where it makes sense.

Of course, it goes without saying that we must continue to protect our most vulnerable populations, women and children, through the implementation of VAWA 2022, increased law enforcement, support for tribal courts, the Tiwahe Initiative, and reducing cases of MMIW.

And of course, these are not just Alaska issues. These are issued faced by Native communities across the Country.

So, Mr. Kirkland, I am looking forward to hearing more about your vision at the Office of Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs this afternoon. I expect Committee members are going to have ad-

ditional questions for you after today's hearing. We would look forward to your responses to those as well.

Again, thank you for being here. Congratulations to you. What we will do is we will hold for Senator Schatz' comments when he comes.

But at this time, I would turn to Representative Brian Jack to introduce Mr. Kirkland. Representative, thank you for coming over to the Senate this afternoon. I know that you have probably had to rearrange your day around this Committee's schedule. So I appreciate your nimble abilities as well.

If you would proceed with your introduction, and welcome.

HON. BRIAN JACK, U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM GEORGIA

Mr. JACK. Thank you, Chairwoman Murkowski, and thank you to yourself, Vice Chairman Schatz, and Senators Hoeven, Daines, Mullin, Rounds, Moran, Cantwell, Cortez Masto, Smith, and Luján, for your service on the Committee on Indian Affairs. Thank you for providing me with the honor of introducing Mr. William "Billy" Kirkland, III, at today's hearing.

I acknowledge that I am a member of what some consider to be the inferior chamber of Congress, so I respectfully ask that you do not hold that against my best friend, Mr. Kirkland.

Billy Kirkland has many wonderful attributes, but there are three defining qualities that will make him an exceptional Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. He is selfless, he is loyal, and he is effective.

Billy routinely sacrifices his time and resources for anyone in need. Many of his family and friends are in the audience and watching at home. Each of us has a story about how Billy always puts us, others before himself.

This was especially felt by our Country's Native American tribes during his service in the administration. During our time working together in President Trump's first term, Billy routinely devoted his early mornings, his entire day and his late evenings to providing our Country's tribal leaders with meaningful moments and impactful interactions at the White House. As Special Assistant to President Trump for Intergovernmental Affairs, Billy was responsible for managing the White House's engagement with tribal governments.

And through his leadership, Billy organized one of the most inspirational events of President Trump's first term, the ceremony honoring Code Talkers from the Navajo Nation, Billy's own tribe, in the Oval Office.

During his time in the Trump administration, Billy's relentless focus was to implement President Trump's efforts to improve the quality of life for Native Americans across all 50 States. In that endeavor, he worked closely with Congress. He worked with you and your colleagues to enact the Ashlynnne Mike Amber Alert in Indian Country Act, which protects Native Americans. He worked with your colleagues and yourself, Chairwoman Murkowski, to enact Savanna's Act, which addresses the scourge of missing or murdered Native American women and men. And he worked with your colleagues and yourself, Senator Cortez Masto, to enact the Not Invisible Act of 2019, which combats violent crime within tribal lands.

He also worked across President Trump's administration to identify opportunity zones to increase employment opportunities and access to capital for our Native American communities.

Throughout each and every one of these efforts, there was one constant: you never saw Billy Kirkland's name in the press. He felt then as he does today that the only credit that matters is facilitating better lives for the millions of Americans whose ancestors inhabited this land thousands of years before many of our own.

To this day, I have never seen Billy Kirkland meet a stranger, whether he is sitting with a tribal elder or chatting with a staffer in the hallway. He treats everyone with the same respect and the same decency.

Billy makes people feel seen and valued. That is something we all know you cannot teach. People trust him because he is genuine and because he is kind.

More than anything, Billy is a family man. His wife, Paige, and their three wonderful children are his foundation. And Billy carries that identity into everything he does and his perspective is grounded in what matters most, and informs how he will lead the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs, as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs.

Effectiveness is an attribute all of us demand from our elected and appointed officials. And in Billy, we have someone who has the ability to enter office with immediate respect from decision makers across President Trump's administration. His voice and the credibility attached to it will ensure the needs of Indian Country are swiftly addressed and solved.

I close recognizing the powerful symbolism with Billy's nomination. Nearly 200 years ago, our government enacted legislation that led to the displacement of tens of thousands of Native Americans. Native Americans in Georgia and many other States were forcibly removed from their ancestral homelands.

Yet today, 200 years later, the first Native American from Georgia has been appointed and awaits confirmation to lead this distinguished office. Additionally, never before has a member of the Navajo Nation, whose members bravely helped us win World War II, been appointed to lead this important post.

As such, this distinguished panel has an opportunity to make history today by advancing Mr. William "Billy" Kirkland III's nomination to serve as the next United States Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs.

I thank you for your time, your consideration, and the opportunity to support my best friend. Thank you.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Representative Jack. We appreciate those comments and we send our good wishes to the other chamber. Thank you so much.

We will now swear you in, Mr. Kirkland, before you testify before the Committee. If you will rise, please.

The rules of the Committee which apply to all nominees require that they be sworn in connection with their testimony. Please raise your right hand.

Do you solemnly swear that the testimony you are about to give to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Yes, I do.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Before you begin your statement, I will ask you three questions that are asked to each nominee that comes before the Committee.

Will you be available to appear before this Committee and other Congressional committees to represent departmental positions and respond to issues of concern to the Congress?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Yes.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Are you aware of any personal holdings, investments, or interests that could constitute a conflict or create an appearance of such a conflict should you be confirmed and assume the office to which you have been nominated by the President?

Mr. KIRKLAND. No.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Are you involved, or do you have any assets held in blind trusts?

Mr. KIRKLAND. No.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Mr. Kirkland, thank you.

You may proceed with your testimony. If you would like to introduce your family, I think I have a suspicion that there are a few of them behind you today. We welcome them to the Committee. Extraordinarily well-behaved, I might add.

We are going to try not to make this too boring for you while you are sitting there supporting your dad. We know that our nominees all have hard jobs, and the families that stand behind them to allow them to serve are very important, and also due respect.

With that, Mr. Kirkland, the floor is yours.

**STATEMENT OF WILLIAM "BILLY" KIRKLAND, NOMINEE FOR
THE POSITION OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY, INDIAN AFFAIRS,
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

Mr. KIRKLAND. Thank you very much, Senator. I would like to thank you first of all for the time I got to spend with you and your staff. Also while not here, I would like to thank Vice Chairman Schatz. I know he will be here soon and I can thank him in person as well.

I know that your staffs put a lot of time in to make sure the important work of this Committee is done and executed. So I thank them as well. I have greatly enjoyed the opportunity to meet with most of you and your staff. And over the past few weeks, it was both a humbling and exciting experience.

I would like to thank Congressman Brian Jack, who we quickly sent to the lesser house, the lower house. Maybe he can refine his chamber a little bit after spending some time with you fine ladies and members. I would like to thank Brian Jack for his friendship and his introduction.

You mentioned my mother and father being here. I would like to thank my mother, Gloria, and my father, Major Bill Kirkland. I will come clean, today is his birthday, and we have a huge surprise party back home that we are going to have to postpone.

[Laughter.]

Mr. KIRKLAND. And maybe actually now that this happened, we can plan it as well.

My sister is also in attendance. Most importantly, I would like to thank my wife, Paige, for being here with our three children. I

would introduce them, but I think you might actually hear from them, depending on how long this Committee hearing lasts, Will, Carter and L.

[Laughter.]

Mr. KIRKLAND. I would also like to thank all the tribal leaders that were here in support of my nomination that I got to meet with. I met with 50-plus yesterday. We had a great reception at the Capitol Hill Club.

I would like to specifically point out Speaker Curley from the Navajo Nation who is here. President Nygren was here yesterday from the Navajo Nation. He had to get back to Navajo. But he was supportive as well. I really appreciate their support; it means a lot.

It is an honor to be here today as President Donald Trump's nominee to serve Indian Country as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior. I was given advice, and I have looked back and watched many of these hearings. It seems pretty typical that when a Native American addresses this Committee they typically introduce themselves in their Native tongue.

Unfortunately, I am no master of linguistics. If you ask my high school English or Spanish teachers, or college for that matter, they would probably tell you it wasn't a gift of mine. My aunties also gave up years ago on me ever mastering the Navajo language. I am sure they hope that I could at least introduce myself, and give my clans here today. If I did that, I might take up the majority of your time and you might miss your remaining votes on the Floor.

So I am going to simply say Yá'át'ééh, y'all. That is Southern Navajo for hello.

[Laughter.]

Mr. KIRKLAND. My name is Billy Kirkland. I am a proud member of the Navajo Nation. I was born just north of the Four Sacred Mountains. I am the son of a Diné mother and a father who served over 20 years in the U.S. Army.

My mother's story is all too common in Indian Country. She was taken from her ancestral homelands during a period known as the Termination Era. She taught me strength and perseverance, traits that define the Native communities, especially the Navajo.

My father, through his military career, taught me commitment and sacrifice and the desire to serve. Growing up, I was given unique perspectives and experiences due to my father's career. I relocated over 15 times before graduating high school, from one coast to the other, even overseas.

Starting over in new environments with different circumstances became second nature, but I learned no matter where in the world my father's job took my family that I was Diné. My mother taught me this. She taught me about Kit Carson and the Long Walk. She taught me about heroic leaders like Manuelito and the legacy they wanted to leave our people.

She helped develop a deep respect for my heritage that has been passed down through my clan relationships. I spent many summer days in LeChee, chasing sheep and hauling water to my Grandma Susie's sheep camp, because like on many reservations even today, water is scarce, and electricity is still just a dream.

It is where I learned first-hand the infrastructure struggles that are far too common still today in Indian Country. I was able to develop an undeniable connection with the land and the people.

But my family has also experienced the darker realities of reservation life, whether it be alcoholism, depression, or lack of opportunity. I have seen first-hand the lack of opportunity, specifically economic opportunity on my own reservation. When the Navajo Generating Station was shut down in northern Arizona, it devastated jobs in an already struggling community. I know we can and must do better.

I believe there is a way to bring meaningful opportunity to Indian Country through balance, while honoring and preserving our Native heritage and traditional ways. If confirmed, I understand that the mission of Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior is to uphold a meaningful government-to-government relationship with federally recognized tribes, Alaska Natives and ANCs; to enact policies that support self-determination and tribal sovereignty; and to steward trust assets while maintaining the Federal trust responsibilities that aim to support the social, cultural, and economic self-sufficiency of tribal communities across Indian Country.

While the Office of Indian Affairs has no official oversight, we will be advocates for our Native Hawaiian brothers and sisters. We will work to ensure that their legal and moral obligations are carried out on their behalf.

If confirmed, I will work with this Committee to uphold the Federal trust responsibilities. More importantly, I will work in partnership with tribal governments, tribal leaders, Alaska Natives and ANCs. I believe they know best what their people need, and know how to meet those needs better than any Federal agency or bureaucrat in Washington, D.C.

During my time in the White House, I was proud to work closely with the Department of the Interior and the Office of Indian Affairs on a range of issues. Our administration was the first to formally recognize the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. President Trump established Operation Lady Justice and later signed into law Senate Bill 227, Savanna's Act, and Senate Bill 982, the Not Invisible Act. I would like to thank the members of the Committee, who I know put a lot of time and work and effort into those bills.

I was privileged to be part of the first administration to recognize and honor and host Native Code Talkers in the Oval Office. We worked to ensure that over 350 Opportunity Zones were included in Native American lands. We formalized the DOI's Opioid Task Force within the Office of Justice Services and authorized the Ashlynne Mike AMBER Alert in Indian Country.

We worked to ensure Indian Country was fully funded in the CARES Act. These were all meaningful accomplishments. But much work remains to be done. My prior experience in the White House, in business, and in government relations has given me unique tools and relationships to help serve all of Indian Country, Alaska Native, ANCs and Native Hawaiians. I know that collaboration and meaningful consultation with tribal leaders must be a top priority.

I will also lean on this Committee's expertise and experience. I have reached out to seek advice from tribal leaders and past Assistant Secretaries like Assistant Secretary Sweeney and Assistant Secretary Larry Echohawk. If confirmed I will continue to do so. I will continue to rely on the knowledge of tribal leaders and this Committee in order to gain their input to most effectively fulfill the duties of the office of Assistant Secretary.

As this Committee knows, Indian Country is not homogenous. One size does not fit all. Each tribe is distinct. Each has its own identity, history, and needs.

If confirmed, my goal would be able to meet those needs and further advance the self-governance and self-determination they so desire. If confirmed, we will honor the diversity of Indian Country by ensuring our policies are responsive, respectful, and rooted in partnership and meet our trust responsibilities.

I am happy to accept any questions and appreciate your having me here today.

[The prepared statement and biographical information of Mr. Kirkland follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WILLIAM "BILLY" KIRKLAND, NOMINEE FOR THE POSITION OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY, INDIAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Thank you, Chairwoman Murkowski, Vice Chairman Schatz, and members of the Committee. I would also like to take a moment to thank your staff for their time and effort. I know the long hours they routinely put in to ensure the important work of this Committee is carried out effectively. I've greatly appreciated the opportunity to meet with many of you and your teams over the past few weeks. It has been both an exciting and humbling experience.

I want to thank Congressman Brian Jack for his introduction—and more importantly, for his friendship. I also want to thank my mother, Gloria, and my father, Major Bill Kirkland, for being here today in support of my nomination. My brother and sister are also in attendance; growing up, they made sure I wasn't the only Navajo in our school systems. And most importantly, I'd like to thank my wife, Paige, for being here with our three children—Will, Carter, and L.

It is an honor to be here today as President Donald Trump's nominee to serve Indian Country as the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior.

It seems typical when a Native American addresses this distinguished Committee to begin with an introduction in their native language. Unfortunately, linguistics is not one of my strengths. My aunts gave up years ago on the idea of me mastering the Navajo language, though I know they still held hope that I could at least introduce myself properly and share my clans here with y'all today. The sad truth is that if I attempted to do so, I'd likely use up all the time allotted for this hearing. So instead, I'll simply say: "Yá'át'ééh, y'all." For those wondering, that's Southern Navajo for "hello."

My name is Billy Kirkland. I'm a proud member of the Navajo Nation, I am Biih Bitoodnii. I was born just north of the Four Sacred Mountains. I am the son of a Diné mother and a father who served our nation in the U.S. Army for over 20 years. My mother's story is one that was all too common in Indian Country. She was taken from her ancestral homeland and family, during a period that is now known as the "Termination Era." She taught me strength and perseverance—traits that define Native communities, especially among the Navajo. My father, through his military career, taught me commitment and sacrifice.

Growing up, I was given unique perspectives and experiences due to my father's career. I relocated over 15 times before graduating high school. From one coast to the other and even overseas. Starting over in new environments with different circumstances became second nature, but I learned no matter where in the world my father's job took my family that I was Diné. My mom taught me this. She taught me about Kit Carson and the Long Walk. About the heroic leadership of Manuelito and his prophetic foresight with this famous quote "My grandchildren, education is a ladder. Tell our people to take it." She helped develop a deep respect for my heritage, that is passed down through my clan relationships. I spent many summer days

in LeChee, chasing sheep and hauling water to my Grandma Susie's sheep camp—because like on many reservations even today, water is scarce, and electricity was just a dream. It is where I learned first-hand the infrastructure struggles that are far too common still today in Indian Country. I developed an undeniable connection with the land and the people. But my family has also experienced the darker realities of reservation life—alcoholism, drug abuse, depression, and lack of opportunity. I've seen firsthand the lack of economic opportunity in Indian Country. When the Navajo Generating Station shut down in northern AZ, it devastated jobs in an already struggling community. I know we can—and must—do better.

The Navajo believe in *Hózhó*—or balance. I believe there is a way to bring meaningful opportunities to Indian Country while still honoring and preserving our Native heritage and traditional ways. If confirmed, I understand that the mission of Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior is to uphold meaningful government-to-government relationships with federally recognized tribes, Alaska Natives and ANCs; to enact policies that support self-determination and tribal sovereignty; and to steward trust assets while maintaining the federal trust responsibilities that aim to support the social, cultural, and economic self-sufficiency of tribal communities across Indian Country. And while the Office of Indian Affairs has no official oversight role, we will be advocates for our Native Hawaiian brothers and sisters. We will work to ensure that both the legal and moral obligations are carried out on their behalf.

If confirmed, I will work with this Committee to uphold the federal trust responsibility. I will work in partnership with Tribal Governments, Tribal Leaders, and ANCs to respond directly to the challenges their communities face. I believe they are best positioned to identify and implement the solutions their people need—better than any federal agency or bureaucrat in Washington, D.C.

During my time in the White House, I was proud to work closely with the Department of the Interior and the Office of Indian Affairs on a range of issues. Our administration was the first to formally recognize the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. President Trump established “Operation Lady Justice” and later issued a proclamation, and later signed into law Senate Bill 227, *Savanna's Act*, and Senate Bill 982, the *Not Invisible Act*.

I was privileged to be part of the first administration to recognize and honor Native Code Talkers in the Oval Office. We helped ensure that over 350 Opportunity Zones included Native American lands. We formalized the DOI Opioid Reduction Task Force within the Office of Justice Services and implemented the *Ashlynnne Mike AMBER Alert in Indian Country Act*. We worked to ensure Indian Country was fully included in the CARES Act, and we worked to streamline and overhaul permitting processes. These were meaningful accomplishments—but much work remains to be done.

My prior experience in the White House, in business, and in government relations has given me the unique tools to serve all Indian Country, Alaska Native, ANCs and Native Hawaiians. I know that collaboration and meaningful consultation with tribal leaders must be a top priority in fulfilling the mission of the Office of Indian Affairs. I once heard a smart Hawaiian say, “you have to go slow to go fast.” If confirmed, I intend to spend my first 90 days listening to tribal leaders and the Congressional Committees of jurisdiction to understand top priorities and develop a clear action plan. I will work to build consensus and move quickly once met. I will lean on the Committees' experience and expertise. I have reached out to and sought advice and counsel from past Assistant Secretary Tara Sweeney and Larry Echohawk and if confirmed I will rely on all Committee members and their input to most effectively fulfill the duties of the Office of Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs.

As this Committee knows, Indian Country is not a homogenous community, one size does not fit all. Each tribe is distinct—each with its own identity, history, and needs. My goal will be to meet those needs and further self-governance. If confirmed my goal will be to honor the diversity of Indian Country by ensuring our policies are responsive, respectful, and rooted in partnership and meet our trust responsibilities.

A. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1. Name: William Henry Kirkland III
2. Position to which nominated: Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior
3. Date of nomination: 02/3/2025

4. Address: [Information not released to the public.]
5. Date and place of birth: [Information not released to the public.]
6. Marital status: Happily married
7. Names and ages of children: [Information not released to the public.]
8. Education:

Eagle's Landing High School, 1996–1998; College Preparatory, May 1998
University of Georgia, 2003–2009; AB Political Science, May 2009

Additional coursework, no degree received, at the following institutions: Gordon College, Barnesville, GA (1998–1999), Brigham Young University, Provo, UT (1999), Clayton State College and University, Morrow, GA (2002–2003)

9. Employment record:

Delta Airlines (ASA) (Ramp agent & baggage handler) Atlanta, GA DOE: (May 2002–Sept. 2002)

Henry County School District (Substitute Teacher) McDonough, GA (Jan. 2002–Jan. 2003)

State of Georgia, Office of Governor Sonny Perdue, (Office of Intergovernmental Affairs Intern) Atlanta, GA (Jan. 2003–April 2005)

Georgia Republican Party, (Field Representative) Atlanta, GA (April 2006–Nov. 2006)

State Representative Jimmy Pruet (Legislative Assistant) Atlanta, GA (Jan 2006–April 2007)

Atlanta Baggage Express (Baggage Deliverer) College Park, GA (May 2005–April 2007)

Virginia House Republican Caucus (Campaign Manager) Sterling, VA (April 2007–Nov. 2007)

Center for an Educated Georgia (Outreach Specialist) Norcross, GA (Jan. 2008–Sept. 2009)

Faith and Freedom Coalition (National Field Director) Duluth, GA (July 2009–March 2013)

Perdue for Senate (Campaign Manager) Atlanta, GA (March 2013–Dec. 2014)

PWK Group LLC (Owner/Managing Partner) Atlanta, GA (Dec. 2014–Jan. 2017)

White House, Executive Office of the President (Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs) (Jan. 2017–July 2018)

White House, Office of the Vice President (Special Assistant to the President and Director of External Affairs) (July 2018–Aug. 2019)

Sun West Mortgage (Marketing) Cumming, GA (Jan. 2021–June 2021)

PWK Group LLC (Owner/Managing Partner) Norcross, GA (Aug. 2019–Present)

Wayne Halfway House, Inc. (Consultant) Waynesboro, TN (Sept. 2021–Present)

10. Government experience: The Commission on Presidential Scholarships, Commissioner (Presidential Board and Commissions Appointment)

11. Business relationships:

The list below represents current and former positions held to the best of my knowledge and recollection.

PWK Group LLC—Managing Partner/Owner (Current)

Braves Holding, LLC (Atlanta Braves)—Consultant (Current)

Burt Jones for Georgia—Consultant (Current)

Harper for Georgia, Inc.—Consultant (Current)

WBJ Leadership Committee, Inc.—Consultant (Current)

Brian Jack for Congress—Consultant (Current)

Pace-O-Matic, Inc.—Consultant (Current)

BGR Group—Consultant (Current)

Freeport-McMoran (via BGR Group)—Consultant (Current)

Wayne Halfway House, Inc.—Consultant/Independent Contractor (Current)

Three Pines Leasing, LLC—Consultant (Current)

American Made Media Consultants—Consultant (Current)

National Public Affairs Strategies—Consulting services as Vice President of Political Strategy (Current)
 Ag-Pro Companies—Consulting (Current)
 A Healthy Future—Consultant
 Georgia Racing and Entertainment, LLC—Consultant
 Sun West Mortgage—Marketing
 THM Consulting—Consultant
 Piedmont Healthcare—Consultant
 Prime Media Partners—Consultant
 Century Strategies, LLC—Consultant
 Indiana Innovation Council, Inc.—Consultant
 Georgia Republican Party, Inc.—Consultant
 Henry Erying for Utah—Consultant
 Never Surrender, Inc. (Formally Donald J. Trump for President 2024, Inc.)—Consultant
 Lincoln Strategy Group—Consultant
 Five Points Consulting—Consultant
 Center for an Educated Georgia (Grassroots Outreach)
 Trump Vance Inaugural Committee, Inc. (Consultant/Public Liaison)
 Trump Pence Inaugural Committee (Consultant/Public Liaison)
 Connect South
 Potomac South

12. Memberships: Assistant Ward Clerk (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints) Pilgrim Mill Ward, Cumming, GA

13. Political affiliations and activities:

(a) List all offices with a political party which you have held or any public office for which you have been a candidate.

None.

(b) List all memberships and offices held in and services rendered to all political parties or election committees during the last 10 years.

During the last 10 years, when serving as manager and owner of the PWK Group LLC, I have provided consultant services to a number of political campaigns, as identified in this questionnaire, and to the Georgia Republican Party, Inc., the Republican National Committee, and to Never Surrender, Inc. (Formally Donald J. Trump for President 2024, Inc.). As Special Assistant to the President and Director of External Affairs in the Office of the Vice President, I worked with political parties and election committees in my official capacity.

(c) Itemize all political contributions to any individual, campaign organization, political party, political action committee, or similar entity of \$500 or more for the past 10 years.

Republican National Committee—\$15,000 (7/1/2024)
 Brian Jack for Congress—\$3300 (3/31/2024)
 Tyler Harper (GA)—\$500 (10/24/2023)
 Brandon Beach—\$1000 (8/28/2023)
 Jeff Landry—\$1000 (5/16/23)
 Burt Jones—\$2588 (12/21/2022)
 Tyler Harper—\$500 (9/22/2022)
 Derek Schmidt—\$500 (6/16/22)
 Blake Harbin—\$500 (3/29/2022)
 Tim Fleming—\$500 (3/9/2022)
 Burt Jones (GA)—\$2583 (1/9/2022)
 Burt Jones—\$1000 (9/9/2021)
 Tyler Harper—\$1000 (8/30/2021)
 Kristi Noem—\$4000 (1/1/2021)
 Kelly Loeffler—\$2800 (12/1/2020)
 Corey Gardner—\$500 (7/6/2020)
 Donald J Trump for President—\$2800 (2/20/2020)
 Great America Committee—\$5000 (6/30/2020)
 Georgia Republican Party- \$1000 (4/8/2020)
 Donald J Trump—\$1000 (5/12/2020)

14. Honors and awards: (List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, honorary society memberships, military medals and any other special recognitions for outstanding service or achievements.)

Hope Scholarship Award
University of Georgia 40 Under 40 Recipient
Eagle Scout

15. Published writings: (List the titles, publishers, and dates of books, articles, reports, or other published materials which you have written.)

President Trump Has Been A Godsend To The Faith Community, ARIZONA DAILY INDEPENDENT (Oct 26, 2020)

16. Speeches: Provide the Committee with two copies of any formal speeches you have delivered during the last 5 years which you have copies of on topics relevant to the position for which you have been nominated.

None

17. Selection:

(a) Do you know why you were selected for the position to which you have been nominated by the President?

I believe I was nominated for my commitment to the American people and my ability to bridge and manage various relationships between different communities successfully. President Trump knows that I am focused on improving the quality of life for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

(b) What in your background or employment experience do you believe affirmatively qualifies you for this particular appointment?

I spent my youth moving throughout our great country and even abroad for a time. My family moved every 2 to 3 years, small rural areas to major urban centers. I am the son of a Diné mother and Army father. My mother taught me strength and perseverance that define Native and specifically Navajo communities. My father taught me what commitment and sacrifice were, and he showed me through his career in the U.S. Army. I spent much of my childhood and youth starting over and adapting to new environments repeatedly. My early adulthood was spent serving a two-year mission for my church prior to graduating from The University of Georgia. These combined experiences have translated to my ability to adapt and learn quickly in different environments and situations while instilling in me a desire to serve.

My employment history spans working from landscaping crews, washing dishes at a pizza restaurant, to serving the President in the White House and starting and managing a successful small business. While in the White House, I served as a Special Assistant to the President, as the Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, and worked directly with all non-federally elected officials, including Tribal Nations. In that role, I interfaced with and served as the liaison to all federal agencies on behalf of various non-federal elected officials. This experience gave me the contextual knowledge and abilities required to lead discussions and best navigate the administration's federal agencies to ensure the best possible outcomes in carrying out meaningful government-to-government communications and upholding the federal government's trust responsibilities with all Tribal Nations.

My background has made me comfortable in all situations and taught me how to adapt quickly in new roles and environments. I am also comfortable leading large organizations while managing multiple complex projects and staff from various backgrounds. Working in the White House, on political campaigns, and as a small business owner, I know the importance of accountability and delivering results quickly.

B. FUTURE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIPS

1. Will you sever all connections with your present employers, business firms, business associations, or business organizations if you are confirmed by the Senate?

In accordance with the terms of the ethics agreement that I have entered with the Department's Designated Agency Ethics Official and that has been provided to this Committee, prior to assuming the duties of my position, I plan to complete a sale of my financial interest in PWK Group, LLC thereby terminating my position with PWK Group, LLC.

If the sale of my financial interest in PWK Group, LLC cannot be completed prior to assuming the duties of my position, then PWK Group, LLC will cease engaging in any business, including the representation of clients, and will remain dormant. Additionally, all amounts owed to me by any of my clients will be fixed before I assume the duties of the position of Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs.

2. Do you have any plans, commitments, or agreements to pursue outside employment, with or without compensation, during your service with the government? If so, please explain.

No.

3. Do you have any plans, commitments, or agreements after completing government service to resume employment, affiliation, or practice with your previous employer, business firm, association, or organization?

No.

4. Has anybody made a commitment to employ your services in any capacity after you leave government service?

No.

5. If confirmed, do you expect to serve out your full term or until the next Presidential election, whichever is applicable?

Yes.

C. POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

1. Describe all financial arrangements, deferred compensation agreements, and other continuing dealings with business associates, clients, or customers.

As noted above, in accordance with the terms of the ethics agreement that I have entered with the Department's Designated Agency Ethics Official and that has been provided to this Committee, prior to assuming the duties of my position, I plan to complete a sale of my financial interest in PWK Group, LLC, thereby terminating my position with PWK Group, LLC. The sale will be completed through a Membership Interest Purchase Agreement, and I will receive full payment of the enterprise value of my financial interest in PWK Group, LLC prior to assuming the duties of my position.

If the sale of my financial interest in PWK Group, LLC cannot be completed prior to assuming the duties of my position, then PWK Group, LLC will cease engaging in any business, including the representation of clients and will remain dormant. Additionally, all amounts owed to me by any of my clients will be fixed before I assume the duties of the position of Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs.

2. Indicate any investments, obligations, liabilities, or other relationships which could involve potential conflicts of interest in the position to which you have been nominated.

I have consulted with the Office of Government Ethics and the Department of the Interior's Designated Agency Ethics Official to identify potential conflicts of interest or appearances of conflicts of interest. If confirmed, any potential conflicts will be resolved in accordance with the terms of my Ethics Agreement that has been provided to this Committee.

3. Describe any business relationship, dealing, or financial transaction which you have had during the last 10 years, whether for yourself, on behalf of a client, or acting as an agent, that could in any way constitute or result in a possible conflict of interest in the position to which you have been nominated.

I have consulted with the Office of Government Ethics and the Department of the Interior's Designated Agency Ethics Official to identify potential conflicts of interest or appearances of conflicts of interest. If confirmed, any potential conflicts will be resolved in accordance with the terms of my Ethics Agreement that has been provided to this Committee.

4. Describe any activity during the past 10 years in which you have engaged for the purpose of directly or indirectly influencing the passage, defeat, or modification of any legislation or affecting the administration and execution of law or public policy.

During my time in the White House, I advocated for legislation that supported Administration policies from Operation Lady Justice to Tax Reform to Trade Agreements to Supreme Court Nominations.

5. Explain how you will resolve any potential conflict of interest, including any that may be disclosed by your responses to the above items. (Please provide a copy of any trust or other agreements.)

I have consulted with the Office of Government Ethics and the Department of the Interior's Designated Agency Ethics Official to identify potential conflicts of interest or appearances of conflicts of interest. If confirmed, any potential conflicts will be resolved in accordance with the terms of my Ethics Agreement that has been provided to this Committee.

6. Do you agree to have written opinions provided to the Committee by the designated agency ethics officer of the agency to which you are nominated and by the Office of Government Ethics concerning potential conflicts of interest or any legal impediments to your serving in this position?

Yes.

D. LEGAL MATTERS

1. Have you ever been disciplined or cited for a breach of ethics by or been the subject of a complaint to any court, administrative agency, professional association, disciplinary committee, or other professional group? If so, please explain.

No.

2. Have you ever been investigated, arrested charged, or held by any Federal, State, or other law enforcement authority for violation for any Federal, State county or municipal law, regulation, or ordinance, other than for a minor traffic offense? If so, please explain.

No.

3. Have you or any entity, partnership or other association, whether incorporated or unincorporated, of which you are or were an officer ever been involved as a party in an administrative agency proceeding or civil litigation? If so, please explain.

No.

4. Have you ever been convicted (including pleas of guilty or nolo contendere) of any criminal violation other than a minor traffic offense? If so, please explain.

No.

5. Please advise the Committee of any additional information, favorable or unfavorable, which you feel should be disclosed in connection with your nomination.

None.

E. RELATIONSHIP WITH COMMITTEE

1. Will you ensure that your department/agency complies with deadlines for information set by congressional committees?

Yes.

2. Will you ensure that your department/agency does whatever it can to protect congressional witnesses and whistle blowers from reprisal for their testimony and disclosures?

Yes.

3. Will you cooperate in providing the Committee with requested witnesses, including technical experts and career employees, with firsthand knowledge of matters of interest to the Committee?

Yes.

4. Please explain how if confirmed, you will review regulations issued by your department/agency, and work closely with Congress to ensure that such regulations comply with the spirit of the laws passed by Congress.

If confirmed I will work to take a diligent and responsible approach to reviewing regulations in coordination with the Department's Office of Policy and Regulatory Affairs and the Office of the Solicitor. I will aim to ensure that regulations issued by Indian Affairs comply with the spirit of the laws passed by Congress.

5. Are you willing to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Congress on such occasions as you may be reasonably requested to do so?

Yes.

F. GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS AND VIEWS

1. How does your previous professional experiences and education qualify you for the position for which you have been nominated?

My professional experiences have been focused on advocating for and working to improve opportunities for all Americans. From starting a successful small business to serving in the White House, my professional career has been focused on result-oriented goals that promote self-determination and economic advancement. Most recently while serving in the White House, I served as a Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs and worked directly with all non-federally elected officials, including tribal nations. In that role, I interfaced with and served as a liaison to all federal agencies on behalf of various non-

federal elected officials. I learned how best to advocate for and on behalf of others within the federal government. I watched the importance of working with the legislative branch to successfully pass a meaningful agenda and policies and I know that local buy in and meaningful consultation is a must to successfully uphold the trust responsibility.

2. Why do you wish to serve in the position for which you have been nominated?

If confirmed to serve as the Assistant Secretary, it would be the highest honor of my professional career. During the first Trump Administration, the country enjoyed economic growth, individual liberties, and safety within our communities. I was blessed to be a member of the team serving in President Trump's first Administration, and I am confident the Administration will produce even greater economic development and growth throughout Indian Country. I know that by working to align the goals of President Trump and Congress, including the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, we can work to improve economic opportunities, energy exploration, education, and infrastructure, and we can work to improve tribal law enforcement and to improve the trust relationship with our tribal nations.

3. What goals have you established for your first two years in this position, if confirmed?

If confirmed I will work to support President Trump and the Secretary's goal to operate more efficiently and effectively with Tribal Nations. I will lead Indian Affairs, with input from Indian Country and Congress, in identifying reforms and changes to improve the lives of those under the trust responsibility of the federal government. Indian Affairs will strive to be accountable to Indian Country by maintaining an open-door policy and focusing on the trust relationship through tribal consultation and communication with Congress. This accountability and communication will allow Indian Affairs to further expand on successes and create opportunities for Indian Country—focusing on economic development and tribal sovereignty.

4. What skills do you believe you may be lacking which may be necessary to successfully carry this position? What steps can be taken to obtain those skills?

While I have spent invaluable time working within the White House and that time and experience will no doubt add in my service as the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs, if confirmed, most of my work experience has been in the private sector. I will need to quickly be brought up to speed on all the responsibilities over which the position has authority. I look forward to working with the career and political appointees already in place to obtain the needed information to advance and elevate all of Indian Country.

5. Please discuss your philosophical views on the role of government. Include a discussion or when you believe the government should involve itself in the private sector, when society's problems should be left to the private sector, and what standards should be used to determine when a government program is no longer necessary.

In relationship to the federal government, I believe our role should be to manage foreign relations, protect individual rights through reasonable checks and balances, and maintain national security by maintaining a standing military. Specifically at the U.S. Department of the Interior and within Indian Affairs, the role and mission is to successfully maintain the trust responsibilities with our Tribal Nations and dutifully ensure meaningful consultation on all matters pertaining to Indian country.

Government should allow the private sector's problems to be worked out as much as possible within the private sector, but when private sector fails to protect consumer rights or ensure fairness the government should step in to protect the individual.

The rate at which the government engages in the private sector should be careful and timely as to not stifle private sector innovation, but like the private sector, government should be scalable and able to adjust. If a government program is no longer needed, I would suspect that constituency it served would let it be known and no longer request those services. After this information is brought to the Office of the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs a final decision can be made on the termination after thoughtful consultation.

6. Describe the current mission, major programs, and major operational objectives of the department/agency to which you have been nominated.

The mission of the U.S. Department of the Interior is to protect and manage the nation's natural resources and cultural heritage with the assistance of the Office of the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs to fulfill the trust responsibilities to American Indians and Alaska Natives. This will be accomplished by working to ensure the missions of the BIA and BIE are realized and the goals of providing better eco-

nomic and educational opportunities are met. The Office of the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs will work to improve the process and speed in which various approvals happen; how the land into trust process is managed, and upholding tribal sovereignty will all be significant missions.

7. What do you believe to be the top three challenges facing the department/agency and why?

A scalable, non uniformed approach to different communities in Indian Country. The Office of the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs cannot carry out a one size fits all uniformed approach to achieving successful outcomes in Indian Country with such a wide variety of diverse community with different challenges. Sovereignty and self-governance remain challenging with bureaucratic tape and federal oversight. Education is the key to economic mobility and overhauling the bureaus and offices within Indian Affairs is a must to meet that goal.

8. In reference to question number six, what factors in your opinion have kept the department/agency from achieving its missions over the past several years?

The answer is simple. Institutional change is hard anywhere, but almost impossible within a bureaucratic setting. Comfort, complacency, and status quo are easy to stick with, but to meet the goals of the Department of the Interior, the Office of the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs has to disavow the status quo and increase collaboration with Indian Country and Congress to avoid the path of least resistance and make real change.

9. Who are the stakeholders in the work of this department/agency?

The stakeholders are vast. They include federally recognized Indian Tribes, their members and communities, private and tribal land and business owners operating within those communities, government agencies, the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, and other Congressional and elected leaders. And ultimately the American people.

10. What is the proper relationship between the position to which you have been nominated, and the stakeholders identified in question number nine?

I believe the Assistant Secretary should be readily accessible to all stakeholders and work in as transparent fashion as possible.

11. The Chief Financial Officers Act requires all government departments and agencies to develop sound financial management practices.

a) What do you believe are your responsibilities, if confirmed, to ensure that your department/agency has proper management and accounting controls?

If confirmed I will work with the appropriate staff to ensure that the management of all Indian Trust financial assets are managed responsibly and in compliance with all current laws and regulations. The Office of the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs will work to improve how current policies are carried out and look for ways to improve them.

b) What experience do you have in managing a large organization?

I have directly managed and supervised staff of over 100 in various organizations. While in my role as Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs at the White House I was responsible for managing the relationships of all non-federally elected officials nationwide. We implemented direct communications regularly with all elected officials we were responsible for. I am confident that, if confirmed, I will be able to navigate the large Indian Affairs organization while overseeing large scale projects meant to uphold the trust responsibilities of the federal government.

12. The Government Performance and Results Act requires all government departments and agencies to identify measurable performance goals and to report to Congress on their success in achieving these goals.

a) What benefits, if any, do you see in identifying performance goals and reporting on progress in achieving those goals?

Reporting goals and progress are vital to any successful organization planning. Without goals and reporting to hold departments and agencies accountable those goals are just a wish list. I look forward to working with staff to establish short- and long-term performance goals to be held accountable.

b) What steps should Congress consider taking when a department/agency fails to achieve its performance goals? Should these steps include the elimination, privatization, downsizing, or consolidation of departments and/or programs?

Congress should always take a thoughtful, pragmatic approach to investigating agency shortcomings and failures. If confirmed I will look forward to working with Congress, specifically the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, to analyze how to better

maximize the Office of the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs and how we are delivering services to Indian Country. Any changes in services being delivered within Indian Country should be made only after meaningful consultation.

c) What performance goals do you believe should be applicable to your personal performance, if confirmed?

If confirmed, I should be held to the same standard as others in similar positions. I look forward to working with the Office of the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs to set impactful goals for the organization and for myself. The goals should focus on uplifting all constituents I will serve. Goals I have set for myself are to improve the government-to-government relationships by improving the consultation process. I believe this will lead to more economic opportunities through increased access to capital and better broadband connectivity which will lead to better and more innovative education opportunities. Additionally, I will seek to accomplish a more streamlined approach to oil, gas, and mineral exploration throughout Indian Country.

13. Please describe your philosophy of supervisor/employee relationships. Generally, what supervisory model do you follow? Have any employee complaints been brought against you?

I believe in a simple yet proven relationship of trust and respect. Supervisor/employee relationships should be built with personal connections that create a family environment where everyone feels valued and respected. Generally, I believe a supervisor should be defined by a shared set of values, which guide decisionmaking and foster a strong team culture. The supervisor should lead by example, they should demonstrate the values they stress by their actions and create a culture of high standards and accountability. I have never had an employee complaint brought against me.

14. Describe your working relationship, if any, with the Congress. Does your professional experience include working with committees of Congress? If yes, please explain.

My professional experiences interacting with Congress have been mostly working to elect or re-elect members to Congress. I look forward to working with Congress and all pertinent Committees to advance Indian Country.

15. Please explain what you believe to be the proper relationship between yourself, if confirmed, and the Inspector General of your department/agency.

If confirmed, my working relationship with the Inspector General will be rooted in respect for compliance and the rule of law. I believe the Inspector General should have access to necessary information that allows them to provide appropriate feedback and recommendations on issues of waste, fraud, and abuse within the agency and department.

16. In the areas under the department/agency's jurisdiction to which you have been nominated, what legislative action(s) should Congress consider as priorities? Please state your personal views.

If confirmed I think Congress should consider any or all legislative action to better promote education reform, economic and resource development on tribal lands with a less paternalistic nature and more sovereignty for tribal stakeholders. These are all very broad in nature because I ultimately feel that priorities need to be made with meaningful consultation with Native communities, Tribes and Congress.

17. Within your area of control, will you pledge to develop and implement a system that allocates discretionary spending in an open manner through a set of fair and objective established criteria? If yes, please explain what steps you intend to take and a timeframe for their implementation. If not, please explain why.

If confirmed, transparency in all areas, including discretionary spending, will be a top priority. I will work to ensure that the trust relationship is upheld and look forward to working with the Committee on Indian Affairs to implement any best practices.

G. FINANCIAL DATA

[Information not released to the public.]

**STATEMENT OF HON. BRIAN SCHATZ,
U.S. SENATOR FROM HAWAII**

Senator SCHATZ. [Presiding.] Thank you, Mr. Kirkland. Thank you to you and your family for your willingness to serve.

For the information of everybody here and everybody watching, we are in the middle of a vote series. So the Chair and various members will be coming in and out. That does not diminish the importance of this hearing, just that we can't miss a vote.

I am going to give my opening statement and then roll right into my questions. Again, thank you to the nominee and to your family for joining us.

Today we examine the nomination of William H. "Billy" Kirkland to be the 15th Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, the highest-ranking Senate confirmed official in Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior. If confirmed, Mr. Kirkland will be expected by statute and by tradition to fulfill the Federal Government's trust and treaty obligations and advocate for the advancement of those obligations across the entire administration.

Here in the Senate, our charge under the Constitution is to provide advice and consent through vigorous vetting and a clear-eyed review of qualifications, as well as Mr. Kirkland's preparedness to conduct himself as a fiduciary, that is his ability and due need to act in the best interests of American Indians and Alaska Natives, and to respect the Federal Government's special political and trust relationship with the Native Hawaiian community.

So this is not a courtesy review. As the Committee with primary jurisdiction over Indian affairs, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native affairs, we expect the Assistant Secretary to carry out the trust responsibility, maintain government-to-government relationships, honor tribal sovereignty and promote self-determination and self-governance. These duties are a given, no matter which party occupies the White House.

The Assistant Secretary must also have a deep respect for Federal Indian law and policy and demonstrate unimpeachable ethics and a commitment to transparency. Based on these metrics and after a thorough review of his questionnaires, I have some clarifying questions which I will be asking. Specifically, I will be asking Mr. Kirkland to explain his qualifications to serve in this position, and we have talked about this.

I will ask him questions to assure that his close involvement in political campaigns at the State and Federal levels, which are not disqualifying, will not affect his ability to serve the best interests of Indian Country. And I will probe Mr. Kirkland's willingness to comply with Federal ethics laws and agency guidance throughout his tenure.

As I have said many times before, this Committee's bipartisanism is its strength. We should agree that the Federal trust responsibilities to Indian tribes is one of the highest moral and legal obligations that we have, and it is our duty to ensure that the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs is held to that exacting standard.

So I am just going to ask a series of questions. They are a little tough, but they are not gotchas. Just to get you ready.

In your ethics paperwork, you reserved the right to seek conflict of interest and personal financial interest waivers under current

law. I would like to understand that a little bit better, and I just want to put the question directly to you.

Will you pledge not to request or accept any ethics waivers?

Mr. KIRKLAND. I pledge to work with the Office of Ethics, the career staffers within the Department of Interior, to make sure whatever I am doing or whatever I do do is always ethically in line with whatever law is in place, and remain ethically compliant in all ways.

Senator SCHATZ. Sure. I get that. You will work with the lawyers in the department to figure out how to comply with the statute.

My question is, you are going to have the discretion about whether or not to ask for a waiver. And that is not up to the lawyers. You get to say, I would like not, I think I have a conflict here, I think it is close enough to a conflict here, that you just say, let me stay out of this, let me build a firewall and let other people handle it.

So you don't have to check with the lawyers to say, I am not going to be seeking any waivers of the ethics laws. It is up to you to decide that. You don't have to confer with the lawyers.

You only confer with the lawyers when you are saying, hey, would it be okay if I got a waiver from the ethics laws in order to work on this thing, where I could be at least conflict-adjacent.

So I am just going to put the question to you a second time. This is not a trick question. It just seems to me if I were you coming into this position, I would just say, look, if anything looks close to an ethical conflict, I am not even going to check, I am going to recuse.

Mr. KIRKLAND. Senator, I appreciate your question. I am not aware of any ethical conflicts or any waivers being requested, and I will continue to make sure that I am compliant in all ways moving forward.

Senator SCHATZ. Your 2025 ethics paperwork says you "plan" to sell your political consulting group, the PWK group, to Potomac South, a registered lobbying firm.

What is the status of that sale? Are you going to execute the sale before you take —

Mr. KIRKLAND. If lucky enough to be confirmed and honored enough to serve in the position, and this Committee decides my worthiness to be confirmed, yes, sir. Everything will be ethically handled and passed over before I take office.

Senator SCHATZ. And you will provide the Committee with a copy of the purchase agreement for that sale?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Happy to remain compliant in all ways and do whatever I am asked to do, yes, sir.

Senator SCHATZ. And can I confirm, again, I am just running the traps here, I am not making an accusation.

Mr. KIRKLAND. Oh, sure, no problem.

Senator SCHATZ. Okay. Can I confirm that neither you nor either of your family will retain a financial interest in the firm?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Yes, sir.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you.

I want to ask you about equal treatment of tribes. In 1994, Congress made clear that all tribes, whether recognized by Congress, the Executive Branch or the Federal courts, are entitled to the

“same privileges and immunities as another.” That is 25 U.S.C. 5123(f). That means that no matter how or when they were federally recognized, all federally-recognized tribes have the same seat at the table with the U.S. Government.

Mr. Kirkland, yes or no, do you agree that all federally recognized tribes are entitled to the same privileges and immunities regardless of how or when they were acknowledged?

Mr. KIRKLAND. I believe that all federally-recognized tribes have a treaty obligation that the U.S. Government has to respect and follow the law in terms of how those obligations have been recorded.

Senator SCHATZ. Yes, but this is a little more of a specific question. The law establishes that it doesn’t matter how or when you were recognized, administrative process recently, legislative process 100 years ago, if you are federally recognized, then you are treated equally by the Department of the Interior.

And my question is, will you abide by that legal principle?

Mr. KIRKLAND. I look forward to abiding by all legal principles and following —

Senator SCHATZ. Okay, do you agree that that is a legal principle?

Mr. KIRKLAND. I am unfamiliar with that particular statute and term. As you pointed out, and will continue to point out, I am sure not a legal scholar. But I look forward to working with the department attorneys and in the Office of the Solicitor to review anything else that I need to further update myself on.

Senator SCHATZ. Okay. This is going to be the toughest one, and we had a conversation about this in private.

You were a senior presentational campaign advisor in 2020 in Georgia. I just want to say, it is okay to work as a political operative. Some of my best friends are political operatives. Very few of my best friends are political operatives who are Republicans. But it is fine.

That is not disqualifying. But there was reporting that was kind of ambiguous as to a specific sort of event. So I just want to hear you under oath. As a senior presidential campaign advisor in 2020, did you participate in, direct, or have any personal knowledge of the President’s Georgia pressure campaign, his phone call with the Georgia Secretary of State, or the electors scheme?

Mr. KIRKLAND. I will just review, as you said, under oath I am happy to reaffirm that. But also just to rehash our conversation in your office—

Senator SCHATZ. You just said, “reaffirm that.” I am not trying to be tricky; I just want to—

Mr. KIRKLAND. I understand. You mentioned that we had this conversation once before.

Senator SCHATZ. Yes.

Mr. KIRKLAND. And I am happy to echo that conversation. Never have I talked to any of the press that reported those incidents. I was not involved in the conversation that took place. I was not in the vicinity or the room with the President or on a telephone.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you.

I suppose it depends who you ask whether that was a tough one, or this is the toughest one.

We talked a little bit about this. Let me put it this way: I make sort of a half joke about how we in the United States Senate are probably not even qualified to be our own LAs, or legislative directors, because of the deep subject matter expertise.

So it is not a knock on someone to say that they may lack the deep subject matter expertise necessary for a particular position. I think the knock on you would be that you are not deeply ensconced in Indian law, you don't have 30 years of tribal leadership, you know. You have demonstrated capabilities in other areas.

But my question is, how we are going to work around, I remember talking to Jim Bridenstine, who was a member of Congress who ended up being the NASA Administrator. Most NASA Administrators had a deep scientific background. I talked to him about it.

And he ended up being a good NASA Administrator. Why? Because he knew what he didn't know, right? He ended up surrounding himself with a bunch of scientists, and not always doing what they asked, but relying on their expertise. We know a lot about that in the United States Senate, because you just can't know everything.

But I think it is fair to say you do not possess deep expertise in this space. So how do you plan to work around that?

It is not a knock on your leadership capacity. But I do think that if you look at the people who have held this position, a lot of them have 20, 30 years on a CV that says, oh, that makes sense. And for you, you have a nexus and a passion for tribal issues.

But I want to be satisfied that if you are not in personal possession of the expertise that you are going to figure out a way to find it and rely upon it.

So could you speak to that?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Senator, I appreciate your question. As I mentioned, you were handling the duties of the Senate and voting and weren't here and missed my opening statement. I mentioned that the process of getting to know your staffs and meeting with you was both exciting and humbling, whether it was questioning ever so politely qualifications, or even the ability to do jobs, or where I was from or how I was raised or even if I—having the ability to speak Navajo almost kept me from taking seriously in this job. It is like I say, a very humbling experience.

In terms of qualifications, while both in business and in my government service in the White House, I will start there specifically, we were the outwardly facing office to—I am sorry, I thought there for a second there my two-year-old had escaped.

We were the outwardly facing office for all non-federally elected officials. That include managing coordination and relationships with 50 governors, 99 State legislative bodies, 7,386 State legislators. On the county government side, that was 33,144 counties, roughly over 19,000 elected county commissioners and county board members.

My background both in the White House and in business includes managing complex issues, managing multiple personalities, people, subject matter, building coalitions, navigating difficult issues within a diverse constituency, managing budgets, coordinating with multiple stakeholders.

You mentioned political campaigns, or marketing, for that matter. In a campaign or marketing campaign, typically you have a really set time period to be successful. You have to identify key priorities and move quickly to make those priorities successful. And you don't have a six-year span to do that. Oftentimes you have months or even a year, but there is a deadline, and if you are not successful, either you win or you lose. And if you lose, you don't last in a business long, whether that is getting new clients or winning an election.

I plan to take those skills I have used and learned in both my government experience and my personal life to serve Indian Affairs. I think that we are in a time where a lot of issues that need to be met, they are timely, and those are the skill sets that I want to take to serve Indian Country in the Office of the Assistant Secretary.

Senator SCHATZ. Thank you.

Senator MURKOWSKI. [Presiding.] I am going to defer to Senator Daines. We are all going to popping in and out with these votes, and I am going to be here for a while. So we will go to Senator Daines.

**STATEMENT OF HON. STEVE DAINES,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MONTANA**

Senator DAINES. Chair Murkowski, thank you.

I appreciate my colleague Senator Schatz, with some of his question about what qualification is needed for this job. But just for what it is worth, I have a picture of the org chart here. You will literally be overseeing thousands of employees reporting to you.

With all due respect, I don't think we have to be subject matter experts, deep, on all these topics. What really this is about is leadership and managing a large and complex organization.

So with all due respect to my colleague, Senator Schatz, I think leadership qualities, passion and mission are probably the most important part of what it takes when you are at the top of an organization like this. I just wanted to make that comment.

Mr. Kirkland, thank you for coming before this Committee today. I appreciate your willingness to serve. I appreciate your family's willingness to serve with you in this. It is a very important position and I look forward to working with you.

The Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs is tasked with fulfilling the government's trust responsibilities to both our tribal nations as well as supporting self-determination. Unfortunately, as I spend a lot of time with my tribal leaders across Montana, they have told me time and time again that the Bureau of Indian Affairs is falling short in that very important mission.

Public safety is the number one concern. I hear this from Indian Country all the time. And frankly, on the ground, it is beyond a full-blown crisis in Montana. Cartel members are exploiting jurisdictional loopholes and often operating with impunity on Montana's reservations. Tribal law enforcement are trying to police some areas that are larger than Rhode Island with only a handful of officers and insufficient resources.

Going back about 10 years, drug overdoses in Montana have skyrocketed, and deaths in Indian Country are three times higher

than the rest of Montana. I appreciate my colleague, Senator Smith, for working with me to introduce the Protection for Reservation Occupants against Trafficking and Evasive Communications Today Act. This bill is going to help give tribal law enforcement the tools they need to police our communities, stop the flow of deadly drugs on the reservations like fentanyl and meth.

Mr. Kirkland, will you commit to working with me to enhance public safety? This is one of the top issues I am hearing from my tribal leaders, to enhance public safety in Indian Country and to help tribal law enforcement get the resources they so badly need?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Senator, I appreciate your question and I enjoyed spending time with you in your office recently with your staff. I have also enjoyed visiting your State, and with the Crow, a few years ago, in the former administration.

As you know, and are well aware, the law enforcement and public safety are a priority of this administration. It is something that Secretary Burgum takes very seriously and I look forward to working with you to advance that within your State, with your tribes.

Senator DAINES. Thank you, Mr. Kirkland.

You have a good boss in Doug Burgum as well. He has been a dear friend for many years personally with me. I remember he chatted with me one day when he was thinking about running for public office, and asked me, what do you think about running for governor some day of North Dakota? I said, that is a great idea, Doug, you should do it.

Mr. KIRKLAND. And Senator, not to go too far off topic, but literally walking in, a good friend also said, Secretary Purdue said to say make sure to say hello as well.

Senator DAINES. Thank you. He is great. And likewise.

Mr. KIRKLAND. So for the record, I can say that I said hello.

Senator DAINES. You did for the record say hello back at you, right?

Let me talk about the water some, this is another high priority for us in Montana. Montana is a semi-arid State. I will tell folks back home that D.C. gets more rain than Seattle does. Check it out. They have more annual rainfall here than Seattle. This is a swampy, wet place, with about 40 inches of rain.

Out in Montana, we are semi-arid. It is between 12 and 16 inches of rain per year. So yes, we have beautiful rivers and we are a headwater State of the Missouri. But our livelihoods depends on water. I envy Chairman Murkowski in Alaska. She is surrounded by water. She has a lot of water; Alaska has good precipitation. And we are pretty arid up in Montana. So water settlements are a big deal.

The Fort Belknap are the original Winters tribe. And their settlement has been over a century, a century is over 100 years, in the making. After decades of negotiation and strong leadership from President Jeff Stiffarm, who has been a great friend and ally and a courageous president, we are almost across the finish line to settle a 100-year issue.

Without a settlement, farmers, ranchers, water users are left in limbo, and these issues are going to end up being litigated in court. This will help bring clean drinking water to the reservation and

provide certainty for not only tribal users, but non-tribal water users alike.

This settlement has already passed the Senate twice, and has unanimous support from the tribe, the State of Montana, relevant counties, and the entire Montana delegation.

Mr. Kirkland, do you agree it is important to enact this agreement to settle a 100-year dispute to close out the last water settlement in Montana, and will you work with Congress to get this done?

Mr. KIRKLAND. I want to work with Congress to make sure that we comply with all treaty obligations to honor our trust responsibility with tribes. Water is vital to life.

In my opening statement, I mentioned I have many keen memories of having to haul water to my Grandma Susie's sheep camp because it is not there. Oftentimes driving, 30, 40 miles to find the water. So I look forward to working with you and your staff on your water issues.

Senator DAINES. Thank you. I have a closing sentence and then I will turn it over back to the Chairman because I am out of time.

I wanted to thank you for your comments and I want to encourage you and urge you to engage with Montana tribes once confirmed to cut through the bureaucratic red tape, to help them support and enhance their communities. We have a real chance to make a difference in Indian Country. I am confident in your leadership.

Thank you.

Mr. KIRKLAND. Thank you very much, Senator.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Senator Daines.

**STATEMENT OF HON. BEN RAY LUJÁN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW MEXICO**

Senator LUJÁN. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Kirkland, from 2009 to 2013 you worked for Ralph Reed's Faith and Freedom Coalition. Is that correct?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Yes, sir.

Senator LUJÁN. Was Ralph Reed a champion of tribes?

Mr. KIRKLAND. I worked for Ralph Reed. We worked —

Senator LUJÁN. That was not my question. My question is, is Ralph Reed a champion of tribes?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Sir, I worked for the Faith and Freedom Coalition.

Senator LUJÁN. Do you have an opinion about Ralph Reed?

Mr. KIRKLAND. I have an opinion that I worked —

Senator LUJÁN. Let me ask you a different question. Ralph Reed was a business partner of Jack Abramoff. Both were accused of defrauding and disadvantaging tribal gaming enterprises for financial gain in the early 2000s, something this Committee conducted extensive oversight on and produced a 350-page report.

Why did you choose to go work for him after that?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Thank you for your question, Senator. When I worked for the Faith and Freedom Coalition, we focused on working with and educating voters on matters of faith that were important to the faith-based community. I never met Jack Abramoff or conducted any business with him.

Senator LUJÁN. My question, Mr. Kirkland, is why did you choose to go back to work for Ralph after that?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Senator, I never chose to go back to work for Jack. I accepted —

Senator LUJÁN. You accepted the job.

Mr. KIRKLAND. Senator, I have never met Jack Abramoff.

Senator LUJÁN. Not Jack. Mr. Reed, that is the group you said you worked for.

Mr. KIRKLAND. I worked for the Faith and Freedom Coalition.

Senator LUJÁN. Why did you choose to go work for him?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Why did I choose to work for Ralph Reed? I worked for the Faith and Freedom Coalition, of which he happened to be the chairperson at the time.

Senator LUJÁN. You didn't work for Ralph?

Mr. KIRKLAND. I worked for the Faith and Freedom Coalition, sir.

Senator LUJÁN. Do you have an opinion about Jack Abramoff?

Mr. KIRKLAND. I never met Jack Abramoff.

Senator LUJÁN. Do you have an opinion of him?

Mr. KIRKLAND. I don't know Jack Abramoff.

Senator LUJÁN. Do you think it was okay that he defrauded tribes?

Mr. KIRKLAND. I don't think it is okay to defraud anyone. I have never met Jack Abramoff.

Senator LUJÁN. I appreciate that. We are on the same page there.

Mr. Kirkland, you said in your testimony that when you worked at the White House, you worked to ensure that Indian Country was fully included in the CARES Act, a piece of legislation I was proud to work on. The CARES Act, of course, was a bipartisan piece of legislation to respond to Covid-19, to the pandemic, which began in late 2019 and early 2020.

I see from your Committee questionnaire that you worked at the White House from January 2017 to August 2019, is that correct?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Yes.

Senator LUJÁN. When was the CARES Act passed?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Sir, when I left the White House, I worked on the campaign and remained in close contact with the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs on tribal —

Senator LUJÁN. Mr. Kirkland, my question is, do you know when the CARES Act was passed?

Mr. KIRKLAND. It was after I left the White House.

Senator LUJÁN. It was March of 2020, after you left the White House. Why do you take credit for working on that after you left?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Because I worked with the White House to do that.

Senator LUJÁN. Who did you work with here in Congress?

Mr. KIRKLAND. I worked within the White House, I worked with Doug Hoelscher, I worked with —

Senator LUJÁN. Did you work with anyone here in Congress to get that passed?

Mr. KIRKLAND. No, sir.

Senator LUJÁN. No? My colleague who had this seat before me, Tom Udall, who was the Vice Chair of this Committee, worked to

ensure it got passed. Are you aware that during your time in the White House that it was the House of Representatives that passed the CARES Act? The Senate had not yet passed it.

Mr. KIRKLAND. I am very aware, sir, that the two bodies in Congress pass bills, yes.

Senator LUJÁN. No. Are you aware that the House passed it before you left the White House and the Senate passed it after you left the White House?

Mr. KIRKLAND. That is excellent. Thank you for telling me that.

Senator LUJÁN. Did you work on the House legislation or the Senate legislation in your advocacy when you were in the White House?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Sir, I said I worked with the White House.

Senator LUJÁN. Yes, did you work with the White House on the House legislation or the Senate legislation?

Mr. KIRKLAND. I worked with the White House on formulating and ensuring that all of Indian Country was included in the CARES Act.

Senator LUJÁN. What did the White House have to do with passing the CARES Act in Congress?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Sir, we met with and talked with and consulted with tribes across the Country, not just federally-recognized tribes, it was also Alaska ANCs. That was meaningful consultation. It was lots of time and effort to ensure that they were all included in the Act.

Senator LUJÁN. I appreciate that, Mr. Kirkland. Is providing funding to American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians a part of America's trust responsibility to tribes?

Mr. KIRKLAND. I think ensuring that the money that Congress appropriates to the Office of Indian Affairs is very important. I think it is very important to the Office to prioritize how best to allocate those funds that Congress allocates to the Office of Indian Affairs—

Senator LUJÁN. I appreciate that.

Mr. KIRKLAND [continuing]. to ensure that we are—

Senator LUJÁN. Mr. Kirkland, my time has about run out. I am sorry to be rude.

Mr. Kirkland, yesterday you are aware that Congress passed a rescissions package. So in your position, Mr. Russell Blowe has already said he sent you another one and Congress says it doesn't matter what they say about this. The Executive Branch is going to do it.

Are you going to stand up and speak up to this administration if they choose to rescind appropriations passed by this Congress for tribal communities across America? The answer is yes or no.

Mr. KIRKLAND. Sir, once I am confirmed, which I hope to be—

Senator LUJÁN. Okay, the answer is not yes. Do you think the administration cutting billions from national programs that support Indian Country and Native American communities lives up to America's trust responsibility?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Sir, I look forward, once confirmed, to working with you, your staff, this Committee and most importantly tribal leaders to prioritize the money that Congress appropriates to the

Office of Indian Affairs to make sure it is best and most wisely invested.

Senator LUJÁN. I appreciate that, Mr. Kirkland. Right now you stand alone in this administration, because yesterday all my Republican colleagues, most of them, voted to get this done. And Russell Blowe has said he is sending another package before the sun even came up this morning. So you are alone in this.

I hope that you are a man of your word and you speak up and stand up to this. Because we need some strong voices. And I hope that we have one in you, sir.

You also talked about water, which I appreciate very much. It matters to us. Mr. Kirkland, do you know how many Navajo brothers and sisters are waiting to have water delivered from the Navajo Gallup water project?

Mr. KIRKLAND. I can't give you that. I look forward to you giving it to me.

Senator LUJÁN. I will give it to you. It is 250,000, sir. Mr. Kirkland, do you know how many recognized Indian water rights settlements are in New Mexico?

Mr. KIRKLAND. I am sure you have that number for me. I look forward to hearing it.

Senator LUJÁN. I will share that with you. Mr. Kirkland, do you know how much funding is needed for the Fiscal Year 2026 budget to keep the Navajo Gallup water project on track?

Mr. KIRKLAND. I will look forward to hearing.

Senator LUJÁN. One hundred seventy-five million. Do you know that if this fails it will be the first Indian water rights settlement to fail in America's history?

Mr. KIRKLAND. No, sir, I was not aware of that.

Senator LUJÁN. It would be. Mr. Kirkland, do you know how much the President's budget, President Donald Trump, allocated for the Navajo Gallup water project?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Not off hand, no, sir.

Senator LUJÁN. Zero dollars. Is that okay?

Mr. KIRKLAND. I am sorry?

Senator LUJÁN. Is that okay that the budget had zero dollars for the Navajo Nation water pipeline settlement?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Sir, I hope that we can put trillions of dollars into the, not just the Navajo's budget, but the Office of Indian Affairs. The facts are that—

Senator LUJÁN. I agree with you.

Mr. KIRKLAND [continuing]. our Nation is facing a crippling national debt.

Senator LUJÁN. I know how to read that, so yes—

Mr. KIRKLAND. As I stated before, I look forward to working with you—

Senator LUJÁN. Mr. Kirkland, my Republican colleagues just added \$4 trillion to the debt. My question is, you in your testimony proudly spoke of your upbringing on the Navajo Nation, your ties to the Nation, hauling water. Speaker Curley is right behind you. Other leaders are as well.

One of the things I am proud to represent is the leadership from the Navajo Nation, brothers and sisters there as well. For too long,

America has ignored its trust responsibilities. This would be the first water settlement to fail.

My question is a simple one. Is it okay or not that the President of the United States, who gave his commitment to the President of the Navajo Nation and other leaders that he would support the settlement, put zero dollars in the budget?

This is an important question, Madam Chair.

Mr. KIRKLAND. I appreciate the question, and I appreciate the enthusiasm.

Senator LUJÁN. Madam Chair, I will yield back. If the answer is not yes, I am worried about this. My colleague talked about leadership qualities. Being honest and keeping your word matters. And I just certainly hope, Madam Chair, that as we are going through all of this that we can find an honest way to tell people, if the answer to the Navajo Nation is they are not getting any money, then tell them so that they can plan, they can budget, we can figure things out to help these people instead of an empty promise.

Madam Chair, maybe I am just tired.

Senator MURKOWSKI. I think we are all tired.

Senator LUJÁN. It is just—this is just frustrating. This is just so frustrating.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Senator Luján.

I am going to reclaim my time here, ask two quick questions and then turn to Senator Cortez Masto and go run and vote. Because I do have more that I want to follow on with.

I mentioned the probate backlog, and how important that is, not only to us in Alaska. We have some cases in Alaska that date back to the 1990s and early 2000s. I know there are cases in the lower 48 that have been open far longer than that. We are basically looking at about a 48,000 unresolved probate backlog. Unacceptable by any measures. And I know the Secretary agrees with that.

But I just need your commitment to working with me, working with this Committee, working within the department to resolve this probate backlog. And I mentioned in my comments that I am worried about workforce, because you can't process these things unless you have people that are dedicated to it.

So I just ask for your public commitment today to work with us to address this. This is an injustice that is just—it has been carried forward for just far too long.

Mr. KIRKLAND. Thank you for your question and comment, Senator.

As far as the probate, once again, I am not in the building yet. I look forward to getting there and learning more about this. But as far as the probate is concerned, it is a priority of the Secretary's. He has spoken with the President about it.

I know that the Secretary has recently visited Alaska, and you were able to speak with him about it too. He has an initiative within the department to tackle that. Typically, as you are well aware, if the Secretary makes a priority of something and the President is chiming in too, that is something that the entire staff and body within the agency is going to focus on. This is one of the things that are on the top of the list.

I can't imagine the heartache that some of these constituents of yours are going through, having to wait five, ten plus years in

many cases to receive what is theirs rightfully. So whether that is through advancements in technology, electric record-keeping or just, we have to learn how to build a better mousetrap. I look forward to working with you on that.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Well, we have to build a better mousetrap, but we have to be processing these while we are still building that.

Mr. KIRKLAND. Correct, yes.

Senator MURKOWSKI. And that is hard to do. But we talk about issues of homelessness and what happens when individuals are forced to move out of the family home because Grandma dies. And they have nowhere to go, and there is a perfectly good home, the family home that they all grew up in, that is boarded up and left to just deteriorate.

It is a travesty and it is something that I think we have just said, we will get around to it sooner than later. And in the meantime, good people are being hurt.

So it is something that I am going to prioritize, and I appreciate that the Secretary has, and I need you to do as well.

I am going to turn it over to Senator Cortez Masto and scoot. I will be right back.

**STATEMENT OF HON. CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEVADA**

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. [Presiding.] Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Kirkland, thank you for visiting with me. I appreciate that. And welcome to your family members, everybody here in support. And congratulations on your nomination.

I am not going to say that I am not going to hold you accountable on a number of issues that are impacting my tribes in Nevada. I do want to talk about one that is very serious, and it is not just impacting tribes in Nevada. It is really across the Country.

Public safety in Indian Country is already severely underfunded. The Department of Interior's 2024 Tribal Law and Order Act Report to Congress stated that the estimated unmet funding need for public safety and justice is over \$3 billion, which includes unmet staffing of over 11,000 law enforcement officers. Yet the President's 2026 budget request calls for cutting \$107 million from BIA's public safety and justice account.

Now, I know you are not there yet. But you will get into a position where you are going to have to cut, based on the President's budget. Can you talk to me about how you are thinking about or what you would plan to do to make those cuts that won't impact law enforcement's ability to combat crimes like drug trafficking and the violence against women that we see across tribal nations?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Thank you for your question, Senator.

I think, first of all, it is unfortunate, but tribal nations have always been asked to do more with less. That is very unfortunate.

I look forward to, once, as you said, once sworn into the position, to getting in the building and taking a deep dive, taking a comprehensive look at where there are opportunities to streamline, where there are opportunities to have more cross-agency collaboration, working across different jurisdictions, how we can better enact training, recruitment, and also keeping those individuals within our systems.

I can't imagine how expensive it is to retrain officers, or law enforcement officers specifically, once they are in place and go someplace else. Most importantly, I am going to look for ideas from you and your staff. As Vice Chairman Schatz mentioned very elegantly, he is looking for someone that if they don't have answers, they are willing to look around.

I am going to rely on your staff and yourself and your tribal leaders within your State for ideas. I want to work with those tribes and find out what they think might work best. Ultimately, it is most important to exercise their self-determination and sovereignty, and I think we can do more at the Department of Interior.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Yes, I appreciate that.

Let me just say, there is already a challenge with the ability to recruit and retain qualified law enforcement officers to serve tribal communities. And with less money now, \$100 million to help keep these tribes safe, you are going to have a challenge.

So I really hope that as you are addressing this issue and make it a priority, you do come to Congress to talk to us about the challenges that you are seeing and be honest about it. Because I am already hearing it from my tribes in Nevada, and I know I also hear from the BIA officers themselves. It is a problem.

Let me also talk a little bit about a couple of issues that are unique to some of my tribes in Nevada. Several tribes have had the rug pulled out from under them by BIA regarding funding for criminal detention services. In July of 2024, a number of tribes received letters from BIA OJS stating that following an audit of their 638 contracts, BIA would no longer provide detention services funding those tribes.

Now, I have been working with BIA to rectify this critical public safety issue. But unfortunately, there has been minimal communication from DOI to the tribes on this issue and how to address it.

So I am hoping that, one, if you are confirmed and put in this position, that you are committed to helping us address this issue and work to ensuring that there is an active line of communication with DOI and the tribes on this very issue.

Would you commit to that?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Yes, Senator.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you.

Another issue that is unique to Nevada, the Shoshone Paiute Tribe of Death Valley Reservation is on the border of Nevada and Idaho. They have had a school there, and for generations have taught some of our tribal children there. It is on Federal land and it is operated by the BIA.

Over the years, it was discovered that the BIA improperly disposed of fuels and pesticides, including two herbicides that make up Agent Orange, on that reservation right by the school, where the school is. Hundreds of children have been exposed to these chemicals and over 100 tribal members have died due to cancer, which is an extraordinary number for a tribe with around only 3,000 members.

Time and time again, the BIA has failed to meet its assessment deadlines and ultimately failed to meet the promise to remediate

this program. As you can only imagine, continued delays have dire consequences to the health and safety of the tribal members and their children.

Will you commit to quickly addressing the remediation of this issue if you are confirmed?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Senator, one, thank you for the question. I look forward to, if confirmed, quickly being brought up to speed on the Duck Valley Reservation issue. I look forward to working with your staff and figuring out what we can do there.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you.

And then one quick question, one final question. I appreciate the work that you did under the first Trump administration with respect to the Not Invisible Act. Thank you for that.

Here is my concern. Chair Murkowski and I both wrote a letter concerned that the report on recommendations to address murdered and missing indigenous women and children, that report, which is supposed to be made to the public, was originally put on the DOJ website. When President Trump took office this time, he took it down.

I am trying to understand why, and how do we get that report back up for transparency and for the public to be aware of. Would you work with us in trying to do just that and publicly post it?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Senator, I appreciate that question. I agree with you it is a very important issue.

Obviously, we don't control the Department of Justice's website. But transparency is of the utmost importance in order to gain the respect or trust of anyone. Transparency is where it starts. I mean, I don't know how much more transparent I could be, all I know is how much money is in my checking account right now, probably more so than my wife does.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Well, she does now.

[Laughter.]

Mr. KIRKLAND. So I am very happy to work with you and your staff on transparency issues.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you.

**STATEMENT OF HON. MARKWAYNE MULLIN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM OKLAHOMA**

Senator MULLIN. [Presiding.] I guess since this was handed over, it is obviously my choice.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Yes.

Senator MULLIN. Thank you, and Mr. Kirkland, thank you for being here.

Can you kind of explain a little bit about your feelings towards Indian Country?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Thank you for the question, Senator. Look, my feelings for Indian Country, they are sort of tough to explain, and maybe you have experienced this as well. I think oftentimes people expect or want to tell you how to feel towards Indian Country, right? They may feel like you don't or haven't lived through the same experiences they have.

So it is oftentimes difficult to put into words. I can tell you that when in Indian Country, whether that is in Oklahoma, or Montana, or within the Four Sacred Mountains of the Navajo Reserva-

tion, there is a comfort there. There is a peace, more relaxed. And it is a feeling that you want to share. There is a pride there.

And I hope to be able to honor those who have come before me, in expressing and giving this pride to others. I think that President Trump and Secretary Burgum love and appreciate and respect Indian Country. I think they care. I have sat in meetings with the President where they weren't public, it wasn't for a TV reporter. And the authenticity that he has been able to show, you oftentimes can't put it to words.

Senator MULLIN. Right.

Mr. KIRKLAND. And that is oftentimes how I feel about Indian Country. And I hope to be able to honor the trust relationship that the Federal Government is responsible for and to advance self-determination and tribal sovereignty.

Senator MULLIN. And what tribe do you come from?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Navajo Nation.

Senator MULLIN. Navajo. See, I am Cherokee, and I never knew I was special for being Cherokee until I came to D.C. Because where I am from, everybody is Indian or wants to be.

And then when I came up here, Tom Cole was the first one that came up to me and said, congratulations, we just doubled the size of our Native American caucus. That was back in 2013. I was like, what do you mean? He was like, well, I am Chickasaw and you are Cherokee. I said, yeah, we taught you how to read and write. No, I'm kidding.

And we joked about it because sometimes there is a misunderstanding. But what they don't understand about Indian Country, and tell me if I am wrong, is we don't look at the world through an RD lens. We look at it from our heritage perspective. Would you agree with that?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Yes, Senator.

Senator MULLIN. And sometimes people that aren't from Indian Country and they are not Native, they don't understand it. They don't get it. Because politics is their world. And they want to make a big difference about it; they want to make a big thing about it.

But end of day, tribal issues, it is a Federal responsibility we have. So you can separate the politics out of it, because we have an obligation. In your role, I have to ask, are you going to fulfill that obligation?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Yes, Senator. There is no RD by any tribe's name. Look, this is, politics are pushed aside on managing or keeping a trust responsibility or a treaty obligation.

Senator MULLIN. That is right.

Mr. KIRKLAND. This is personal for you and I. These are our people. These are our tribal, like the Hopi are going to be different from the Navajo, or the Chickasaw or the Cherokee. There is a trust relationship that has to be honored between us and the Federal Government.

Senator MULLIN. And it is drastically different. All our tribes in Oklahoma are going to be all different from the tribes in the Midwest.

I think one of the coolest things that you have the ability to do is you get to learn all those different needs. And when you go in there with a background like yourself, and with Native people at

the front of your mind in any decision you make, you have an opportunity to actually get to know them and get to know what their unique challenges are.

I just hope in this Committee that we try to leave the politics out of it and just put Indian Country first. That is what our responsibility is here. That is why I think this Committee is unique. Because if there is ever a committee that works in a real bipartisan manner, it is this Committee.

And we have to be careful that we don't separate that. Because as I repeat myself again, we have a Federal obligation. And regardless if you are Native or you are not, if we are in this position of authority, if we are in this position to actually affect that, we just need to understand that, and just all be in the same boat working together.

So thank you for standing up. Thank you for your family, too, to going through this with you. Because it is a challenge. Your ability to continue to stay in the fight for Indian Country is commendable. So, God bless you.

Mr. KIRKLAND. Thank you, Senator.

Senator MULLIN. Are we finished? Oh, you want me to recognize you?

**STATEMENT OF HON. MARIA CANTWELL,
U.S. SENATOR FROM WASHINGTON**

Senator CANTWELL. Yes, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I so appreciate this hearing for the consideration of your nomination, Mr. Kirkland. Congratulations on that and to your family.

Protecting Native communities is one of our most important trust responsibilities and one of the biggest threats to Indian Country right now is fentanyl. We have a couple of billboards here about the problem. Twelve indicted recently in a big drug enforcement operation on the Yakima Nation. It had so much fentanyl you could have literally killed everybody as a member of the Yakima Tribe. We had a similar incident up in Bellingham a few years ago.

Just this week, the DEA, in partnership with the Yakima Nation, announced charges against 12 individuals for trafficking fentanyl on the Yakima Reservation. And in February, the nation was selected to put this into an Operation Overdrive investigation.

So over that 120-day operation, DEA worked closely with the BIA, the Yakima Nation, the Wapato Police Department, to see 7,000 pounds of marijuana, 300 pounds of meth, 25 pounds of cocaine, 7 pounds of fentanyl, and over 4,700 fentanyl-laced pills. According to the special agent in charge, as I said, it would have yielded enough lethal doses to kill everyone in the whole county.

So this operation also was important to stopping the flow, and in Yakima County, in the community, it has experienced 19 overdose deaths since February, 12 in March and 12 deaths by the end of June.

So we are doing everything we can to work together in a collaborative fashion. And I hope that you will work with us and my colleague who just left, Senator Markwayne Mullin, on the Parity for Tribal Law Enforcement Act. This is really important legislation that helps tribes recruit and retain law enforcement, allowing them

to offer Federal benefits that are currently available only to State, local and Federal law enforcement.

So will you commit to work with Senator Mullin and myself on this legislation and try to get it implemented?

Mr. KIRKLAND. I look forward to becoming better educated on all legislation that you and your colleagues are prioritizing, and specifically on this legislation you speak about. Look forward to learning more about it and working with you and your staff.

Senator CANTWELL. Okay. If you would take a look at it and give us a little more specificity before your vote, that would be great.

Currently, tribal public safety is funded at just 13 percent of the total need. And the President's budget proposes an additional 15 percent cut to BIA public safety. So that is why we want to understand where you will be on these programs and whether you will commit to doing that.

How will you fight back against the Administration and OMB efforts to shortchange Indian Country? What do you think right now you can do to help an administration that may not be as familiar with the impacts of these budget cuts?

Mr. KIRKLAND. I think the first thing, well, first, again, let me start by saying thank you, Senator, for the question, for your work on the Committee and the time that we were able to share. I know you specifically made an effort to visit with me. I appreciate that and appreciate the time spent with your staff as well.

I think when it comes to prioritizing the budget in the Office of Indian Affairs and how that is allocated throughout Indian Country, look, there is a trust relationship that is sacred there. There are treaty obligations that we have to maintain and uphold. I think that opening up lines of communication to effectively communicate that is first and foremost of the most importance.

And collaborating with the tribal leaders to prioritize what needs they see are the most important, specifically when it comes to law enforcement and protecting our tribal communities. I think whatever dollars are allocated toward the Office of Indian Affairs by Congress, we are going to work to make sure we get the best investment, whether that is allocated towards resources or law and order.

I can commit to looking forward to working with you and your staff to ensure that is done.

Senator CANTWELL. Thank you.

On hatchery issues, in the Inflation Reduction Act, we funded \$240 million in hatchery funding for tribes. While you might think of this as geographic, I can guarantee you my colleague from Alaska wants more fish production, period.

So I think 27 tribes were deemed eligible to receive \$2 million in funding. Many of the eligible tribes have not received the funding yet. So what will you do to help us get hatchery dollars out the door?

Mr. KIRKLAND. Thank you for the question.

Senator CANTWELL. This is in BIA particularly.

Mr. KIRKLAND. I think in terms of BIA in general, I think that there are a lot of passionate individuals that work there and career service people that serve Indian Country and love their jobs. I

think that ultimately, though, there are also a number of protocols and processes that need to be looked at closely.

We need to find where the bottlenecks are and figure out how to make them more efficient. When there are vital services that need to be acted on, when there are funds that have been approved that need to be pushed out, we need to work together and make sure those are done in a timely manner.

I think there is no question that there is room for improvement.

Senator CANTWELL. Great. Well, we definitely want to see those hatchery dollars. And then I am pretty sure you believe in commitment to a trust and treaty responsibility for those tribes that have, and in general, government-to-government responsibilities.

Mr. KIRKLAND. Yes, ma'am.

Senator CANTWELL. Thank you. All right, thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator MURKOWSKI. [Presiding.] Thank you, Senator Cantwell.

Mr. Kirkland, we focus a lot on public safety in Indian Country. In Alaska we have what was described as a rural public safety crisis. This was Attorney General Barr's own words after he came to Alaska to visit.

In the Fiscal Year 2024 Interior appropriations bill, I was able to direct BIA to conduct tribal consultation on the budgetary needs of tribal law enforcement. This includes everything from wellness courts, other essential justice needs. But we asked them to report back on the available funding, whether it is at DOI or elsewhere for tribes in the PL-280 States.

The BIA did this consultation, so they have done that part of it. But we still have yet to see the report. So I know you are not in a position to get that for me, but I would ask that if you are confirmed, that you can ensure that we get the report on this consultation.

Because I think it is going to be instructive in terms of, you mentioned navigating some bottlenecks here with Senator Cantwell. We are going to need to navigate some bottlenecks, including those that may be internal to BIA to support public safety and justice in Alaska. And this report is going to be very important.

So I just need your commitment, your awareness, you know it is out there. We have to get it out.

Mr. KIRKLAND. Yes, Senator. Quite frankly, I don't know why they would have the consultation if they weren't willing to provide the outcomes of that, right? The whole goal of a meaningful consultation is to come to an outcome that works best for both tribes and the trustee.

I think we definitely can work together to try to figure out where those reports are and be transparent and get those to you as quickly as possible.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Okay. We will look for that expeditiously, then.

We talked a little bit about interagency communication when you were in my office. The Department of Interior has been the main department that works directly with tribes and the Native communities to implement Federal Government trust and treaty obligations. But as we know, it expands far beyond the Department of Interior. It is absolutely over in HHS.

Secretary Kennedy is well aware of that in the role that he has at IHS. But it is across, it is literally across all departments.

So it was Senator Daines that kind of acknowledged the org chart within BIA. It is extensive; it is extensive. I was going to use a word like crazy. It is complex. So being able to work collaboratively with the Federal agencies and the different departments, you are going to be overseeing BIA.

But in order to be effective for American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, you are going to have to figure out how you work with the folks in HUD to deal with so many of the tribal housing issues that we have. You are going to have to be able to deal with the folks over at HHS in addressing the fact that when it comes to health care disparities, our statistics are awful, they are awful among our Native populations in terms of life expectancy, diseases, things like suicide and substance abuse.

So I would like to hear just briefly here how you feel, or whether you feel that it is important to do this kind of collaboration, or do you just work within your own rather extensive org chart?

Mr. KIRKLAND. I think in order to fully advocate for tribal nations, for our Alaska Natives, ANCs, or even our Native Hawaiian brothers and sisters, you can't simply silo the responsibilities of the office to the Department of Interior. I think that in advocating for all of Indian Country, that includes working with HUD, that includes working with HHS.

I can say that we ruined the Valentine's Day for the White House's Office of Inter-Governmental Affairs, because they were connected with HHS on a number of issues that were coming to deadlines of importance. Calling the Deputy Secretary over at HUD, I look forward to doing that, to talk about tribal housing issues or any concerns that an ANC may have or not have.

So cross-collaboration is something that is a part, it is not doing anything extra, going above and beyond. It is part of the duties and responsibilities of the Assistant Secretary.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Well, and your, I guess, background for this position, Senator Schatz spoke to it a little bit. I think one of the things that you actually do bring to the table is having worked within the previous Trump administration.

Basically what we need is somebody at BIA who can pick up the phone and call a Secretary and say, we have a problem here. And you know what? This problem has been shoved under the rug for too many years by too many administrations. Maybe even from the prior Trump administration. And being able to get the attention on these matters that have been left to founder for too long.

I have been on this Committee since I came to the United States Senate. I think I am probably the longest—maybe I am not the longest-tenured member. Maybe Senator Inouye was. I don't know.

But I have been here for a long time. And it troubles me deeply that we go year after year, we go Congress after Congress, we go administration after administration and we wring our hands and we say, we haven't made any headway.

We have been working on water settlements that take 100 years, practically. We are looking at health disparity statistics that are as bad now as when we started. We are dealing with issues of poverty and for gosh sakes, basic water needs.

We look at our educational outcomes. And I don't think it is because we have people who don't care here in Congress. I think we care deeply. But there is a frustration with how that level of caring translates into budgets, because I chair the Interior Appropriations Committee, but on the authorizing committee, and then translates into commitment on the ground.

So we need people who are going to carry the burdens of Native people and the challenges that they have faced oftentimes for generations, and champion them and get people to pay attention in the administration.

Because I think you are going to find that the people behind this dais care deeply about it. You heard the passion in Senator Luján's voice. He is not angry at you. I think we are frustrated because we know the need. And we care about solving problems.

And we need to know your commitment to solving these problems with us. And we are counting on you, whether it is being able to speak directly to the President and capture his heart on this, or wherever it is in that political landscape that is out there.

That is more of a comment than a question. But I think that this is an important part of what you are going to be tasked to do. So when I ask the question about interagency communication, it is broader than that. It is not just being able to pick up the phone and know who to call. It is to be able to put that urgency to, work with me, let's find a solution that will work.

I want to get a couple more asks from you, then I will turn to Senator Luján. But we still have two more votes, believe it or not, we are bouncing up and down. Next time I will take the kids, and we will get a little exercise.

[Laughter.]

Senator MURKOWSKI. The Tribal Climate Resilience awards, I worked pretty hard on the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. We had good investments for Indian Country in that. One of the things that we were able to include was \$216 million for BIA's Tribal Climate Resilience program.

I described to you the situation in many of our communities whether it is threats from erosion or thawing permafrost, what it means to communities like Newtok, Quinhagak, Napakiak, they are living with these threats every day.

We have heard a lot about the pauses in these awards. We have reached out to BIA and to the Secretary. We have made some progress. But we are still continuing to hear about funding pauses.

So I just need to know that if confirmed, you are going to be able to work with me, my staff and the staff of all of us here, as well as those on the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, to release these funds. Again, these have been authorized. We have appropriated to them. You have clear need out in the communities. And we would like to see them addressed. So just putting that also on your radar.

Last question for you. Yesterday was a pretty tough day. It was hard, this rescissions package cut millions of dollars in different areas, some in global health. But also, a billion dollars in public broadcasting. As you know, there are real funds that help tribal and rural public radio stations.

I spoke to an amendment yesterday that was pretty important. We had just gotten an alert in the afternoon of a 7.3 earthquake that struck off the coast of Alaska around Sand Point, tsunami alert. And it was public radio that basically told people, get to higher ground, get out of the way of the potential tsunami, and then gave them the all clear coming back.

Our subsistence fishermen that are on the rivers right now, out in the ocean in Alaska, they are all relying on good things coming from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. And when I talk to Alaskans and they are listening to the weather report that is going to let them know whether they can safely go out on the fishing grounds, or when they are waiting for the 8:15 a.m. call to find out where the ice jam is on the Yukon and how far from my village it is going to be, and do I need to get my snow machine out of the way so that my means of transportation doesn't get flooded, they don't think that this is some radical leftist propagandist plot. They say wow, this is like, help me live through my day.

So I continue to be a strong supporter of what we have with our public broadcasting and how they broadcast. KYUK has a program in English and Yup'ik. So it is a great blend to help continue the language that is so important out there.

A lot of examples you are going to hear from people on this dais here. But what we know is that there is a promise from the administration to reallocate funding from the Department of Interior, from the BIA account, to provide one-time support for tribal public media stations.

The concern that I have is that is one-time support. We understand that it is a competitive grant funding program. So my stations in Alaska, about less than half of them are tribal stations. Others are not. So they won't have any access to these grants.

So the little station that advertised the tsunami down in Unalaska won't have any help or support from this. But others may.

But the concern that I have is that we are going to have a situation where you are tasked to find money within the BIA budget to do this temporary funding for these tribal stations for one year. But you are going to have to take it out of funds that have already been either obligated or certainly tribal entities are relying on this. So we can't have a situation where it is robbing Peter to pay Paul.

I don't ask you to have a solution, to have an answer for me now. Obviously this is all very new. It may or may not be resolved by the time you get through the confirmation process.

But know that from the perspective of where Indian Country comes down in terms of support for public broadcasting, it is everyone from NCAI, it is AFN, I have all kinds of letters that we will submit for the record so that you do have them.

But know that these are important for a host of different reasons, and I for one in my capacity here and the authorizing committee and on the appropriating, I am not going to just settle back and say that so many in our rural areas and in our tribal communities will not have access to whether it is life-saving notifications or the opportunity to learn in your Native heritage language.

If you have any comments on that, I am happy to take them.

Mr. KIRKLAND. I appreciate your concern and your question. I fully especially appreciate, I have learned the longer the question

or the statement, the less time I have to reply. So I appreciate that as well.

[Laughter.]

Mr. KIRKLAND. I look forward to working with you on this issue and finding out where things are, learning more about it. I hope to do it sooner rather than later, because that means I have been confirmed.

I appreciate your time; I appreciate the questions from the Committee members who had to run to vote. I know that those are continuing to rack up. I look forward to, if I am lucky enough to be confirmed, working with all Committee members. I look forward to working with the Senator from New Mexico as well, and his staff.

So I appreciate your time, Senator.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Well, we thank you for coming before the Committee, for fielding all of our questions. I know that other members may have questions. We will hold the record open for 24 hours to receive those.

To you and your family, thank you, and you guys have done a super, super great job. Happy birthday to your dad.

Thank you, and with that, the Committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:19 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. RYAN JACKSON, ACTING CHAIRMAN, HOOPA VALLEY TRIBE

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Schatz:

Thank you for Senator Murkowski's February 5, 2025, letter to Acting OMB Director Matthew Vaeth that urged him to protect the integrity of the federal trust relationship with Indian tribes and enforce the "statutory authorities, treaty, and/or trust obligations" of the United States to Indian tribes.

As the Committee on Indian Affairs considers William Kirkland's nomination to be the Department of the Interior's Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, we request that you seek assurances from Mr. Kirkland that he will be a voice in the Administration for fair and full consideration of issues affecting tribal rights and sovereignty.

We make this request with the understanding that the Department of the Interior includes numerous agencies with policy and funding objectives that often compete or conflict with the federal trust responsibility for vested tribal property rights in natural resources including water, fish, and wildlife, which are vital to our tribe's customs, traditions, culture and economy.

For example, Forrest Gerard, the first Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, wrote that the establishment of that post represented an unparalleled opportunity for Indians to influence policy at the highest levels of the Department. The Assistant Secretary will participate more in policy formulation in the Office of the Secretary and will be more directly involved with the Office of Management and Budget, and the Congress. Never before in the long history of FederalIndian relations have the head of the Bureau been so strategically placed within the Executive Branch.¹

Assistant Secretary Gerard then stated what that meant for the federal trust responsibility.

I am going to take an active rather than a reactive position as to the trust obligation. And in order to accomplish this we are going to strengthen the capabilities of the Bureau to deal with trust responsibilities. This will mean increasing staffing in the area of natural resource specialists within the office of trust responsibilities. And I also will work to get additional staffing in the division of Indian Affairs in the office of the solicitor.²

Upon President Reagan's appointment of Ross O. Swimmer as the fourth Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs in 1985, Secretary Donald Hodel embraced Forrest Gerard's vision of the Assistant Secretary's role by acting promptly to ensure that the Department would fully account for its federal trust responsibilities. He advised his senior staff that any issue affecting Indian Affairs in any Department program could not be brought to his attention for decision without it first having been timely reviewed by Assistant Secretary Swimmer in consultation with the affected tribe or tribes.

We bring this to your attention because an Interior Department Agency, the Bureau of Reclamation, has devastated fisheries in which the Hoopa Valley Tribe has vested property rights that the United States holds in trust. The Bureau's construction and operation of irrigation projects on the Klamath and Trinity Rivers caused that damage, notwithstanding statutory protections for the fisheries on which we have relied since time immemorial.

Note especially that our tribe is the unique beneficiary of an explicit and specific statutory trust responsibility in federal reclamation law to restore Trinity River fishery to populations that existed prior to the construction and operation of the

¹ https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/17/oa_monograph/chapter/3142224/pdf at page 350.

² *Id.*, at 348-349

Central Valley Project's Trinity River Division in California. Central Valley Project Improvement Act, Public Law 102-57 5 Title XXXIV § 3406(b)(23) (1992).

Nonetheless, the Bureau of Reclamation has failed to fulfill that fiduciary restoration mandate, and the Klamath fishery will be adversely affected by Secretary Burgum's February 10, 2025, memorandum rescinding fishery protection measures on the Klamath River. The Secretary issued that memorandum without first obtaining the advice of a confirmed Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs or consultation with our Tribe.

Accordingly, we request you address the following questions to Mr. Kirkland at his confirmation hearing.

What steps will you take to ensure fair consideration and full protection of tribal trust resources and sovereignty affected by Interior Department agencies other than the Bureau of Indian Affairs?

Will you ask Secretary Burgum to suspend his February 10 decision on the Klamath River fishery until you have been confirmed, reviewed the matter with the affected tribes in the Klamath River Basin, and provided Secretary Burgum with your advice?

Will you ask Secretary Burgum to withhold other decisions that tribes advise will have adverse impacts on tribal trust resources until after you are confirmed and have had the chance to consider them in consultation with the affected Indian tribes?

Will you ask Secretary Burgum to advise his senior staff that any issue affecting Indian Affairs in any Department program shall not be brought to his attention for decision without it first having been timely reviewed by you in consultation with the affected tribe or tribe?

Your attention to this request is appreciated.

GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY
July 8, 2025

Dear Chair Murkowski and Vice-Chair Schatz:

On behalf of the Gila River Indian Community, I am writing to express the Community's support for the confirmation of William Kirkland to serve as Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior.

The Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs position at the Department (ASIA) is a critical position for Indian Country. Tribes rely upon the ASIA to ensure the trust responsibility is carried out throughout the Department and to provide guidance to the Secretary on tribal programs and policies.

Mr. Kirkland's prior experience in the White House—Intergovernmental Office, during President Trump's first term will be valuable in the ASIA position. Mr. Kirkland interfaced with tribal governments at a stressful time as Indian Country was working with the White House to navigate during the pandemic. Through this experience, Mr. Kirkland developed a sense of the issues facing Indian Country and how to work together in partnership with tribal leaders to develop solutions. We think this experience will serve Mr. Kirkland well during his tenure as Assistant Secretary.

The Department is currently working to implement a number of Executive Orders issued by the President that impact Indian Country. In particular, the Department just concluded consultation on Executive Order 14210—"Implementing the President's Department of Government Efficiency's Workforce Optimization Initiative." Decisions will be made within the Department about potential realignment of resources, possible rescission recommendations, and staffing that will impact how the trust responsibility is carried out and how tribal self-determination will be supported at the Department. The Community believes it is critical for the Department to have key decisionmakers confirmed in order for key policy decisions to take into account the needs of Indian Country.

We look forward to the Committee's nomination hearing on Mr. Kirkland on July 16th and we hope the Committee can move toward a quick vote and full Senate confirmation of Mr. Kirkland.

Sincerely,

HON. STEPHEN ROE LEWIS, GOVERNOR

 THE KLAMATH TRIBES
July 25, 2025

Dear Chair Murkowski and Vice-Chair Schatz:

I write today in support of the nomination of Billy Kirkland to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior. I am thrilled about his nomination and the potential for him to serve the Trump Administration and Indian Country in this capacity.

The Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs plays a vital role in assisting and advising the Secretary of the Interior in fulfilling the Department's trust and treaty obligations. Their work necessitates strengthening the government-to-government/nation-to-nation relationship between the Federal Government and American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes, protecting Tribal trust assets, advocating for policies that uphold and enhance Tribal sovereignty, and administering the laws, regulations, and functions of the office to all 574 federally recognized Tribal Nations. I believe Mr. Kirkland demonstrates a strong ability to succeed in fulfilling these numerous responsibilities, and his appointment is a step towards enhancing the federal-Tribal partnership and addressing the pressing needs of our communities.

I am pleased to join many Tribal leaders and Indian organizations in expressing my wholehearted support for Mr. Kirkland and believe that he will excel in the role of Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. He is a proud American and a citizen of the Navajo Nation, with invaluable policy experience, having previously served as Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs during the Trump Administration. He has established a strong reputation and consistently demonstrated his ability to be an effective leader in this pivotal position.

I look forward to his swift confirmation by the U.S. Senate and future opportunities to work together on behalf of our Country's sovereign Tribal Nations.

Sincerely,

HON. WILLIAM RAY, JR., CHAIRMAN

 ONEIDA NATION
July 19, 2025

Dear Chairman Murkowski, Chairman Lee, Vice Chairman Schatz and Ranking Member Heinrich,

On behalf of Oneida Nation, representing 17,200 tribal citizens, I submit our endorsement of Mr. William "Billy" Kirkland's nomination to serve as the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs. A citizen of the Navajo Nation, Billy is one of our own and has lived and breathed the joys and challenges of Indian Country his entire life. He understands the foundation of tribal sovereignty and respects and honors Treaties as the supreme law of the land.

The Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs is the person who will serve as a steward of the trust relationship between the United States and Indian tribes. When Billy served in a similar role in the initial Trump presidential team, he was a tremendous representative engaging in government-to-government relations with tribes and connecting Tribes with the appropriate agency across the federal government to help advocate for our tribes' priorities around public safety, healthcare, education and economic development. Billy has spent his career as a public servant, working for Indian Country and assisting communities that are in dire need. He understands religious freedom and respects the culture of Tribes, thus having an Assistant Secretary with such deep experience protecting sacred sites and tribal cultural practices would be tremendous. I also appreciate his professionalism and leadership experience. Like Secretary Burgum, he is knowledgeable and experienced in a broad range of industries including financing, technology, energy, tribal economic development efforts and navigating federal permitting challenges.

Although there is confidence in his professionalism and leadership abilities, there is also an expectation that disagreement will occur. However, I am confident that he will listen and be ready to offer, or consider, compromises and creative solutions, and this is exactly the type of person we need to work with Indian Country. I respectfully request your consideration and support of his nomination.

With a Good Mind, a Good Heart, and a Strong Fire,

HON. TEHASSI TASI HILL, CHAIRMAN

YAVAPAI-APACHE NATION
July 23, 2025

Dear Chairman Murkowski, Chairman Lee, Vice Chairman Schatz and Ranking Member Heinrich,

On behalf of the Yavapai-Apache Nation, I am pleased to offer our strong support for the nomination of William “Billy” Kirkland to serve as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs.

Billy, a citizen of the Navajo Nation, brings a lifetime of lived experience and commitment to Tribal Nations. Raised with a deep respect for Tribal sovereignty and Treaty rights, Billy has spent his career in public service working to strengthen government-to-government relationships and deliver results for Indian Country.

During his time in the Trump Administration, Billy was a trusted advocate who engaged regularly with tribal leaders. He was accessible, respectful, and consistently helped connect tribes with key federal decision-makers, especially on issues like public safety, healthcare, and economic development.

Billy’s background also includes significant work on religious freedom and the protection of sacred sites—issues of critical importance to our communities. Combined with his experience in technology, energy, and economic development, he brings a rare and valuable perspective to this role.

We may not expect agreement on every issue, but we know Billy will always listen and work in good faith to find solutions that serve Tribal interests. The Yavapai-Apache Nation offers our full endorsement and urges his swift confirmation.

Sincerely,

HON. TANYA LEWIS, CHAIRWOMAN

ANCSA REGIONAL ASSOCIATION (ARA)
July 7, 2025

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Schatz,

I write on behalf of the ANCSA Regional Association (ARA) whose members represent the 12 Alaska Native regional corporations established under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. ARA’s members collectively serve more than 160,000 Alaska Native shareholders, descendants, and their families, and are stewards of millions of acres of land in Alaska.

ARA is pleased to support the nomination of William “Billy” Kirkland as the 15th Assistant to the Secretary for Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior. Many of our members had the opportunity to work with Mr. Kirkland in his capacity as Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs in the first Trump Administration and were impressed by his commitment to American Indians and Alaska Native peoples.

As a member of the Navajo Nation, Mr. Kirkland will be instrumental in carrying out the federal government’s trust and treaty responsibilities to tribes and ANCs across Indian country and Alaska.

Alongside several other major Native organizations, ARA urges the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to recommend Mr. Kirkland for a full Senate vote without delay and looks forward to working with him in his new role.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please contact me directly if you have any questions about the content of this letter.

Quyana,

NICOLE BORROMEO, PRESIDENT

CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF THE CHEHALIS RESERVATION
July 14, 2025

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Schatz,

On behalf of the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation, I am writing to express our support for President Trump’s nomination of William “Billy” Kirkland to be the next Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs (AS-IA).

The U.S. Department of the Interior carries out a wide range of programs that were established to effectuate the United States’ unique trust responsibility to In-

dian tribes and Indian people. These include law enforcement, natural resources, economic development, and social services, to name a few.

Indian tribes face ongoing challenges to provide for the health and welfare of their people. the Chehalis Tribe is no exception. The Office of AS-IA is the tip of the spear for these issues at the Department.

A backlog of pending decisions, including fee-to-trust applications, has accumulated at the Department that affect Indian tribes, including matters that will benefit the Chehalis Tribe. Most of these decisions will remain pending until the AS-IA position is filled. With each passing day that the AS-IA position remains vacant, Indian country lacks a Senate-confirmed voice within the Department to advocate with Department leadership and the Administration on its behalf.

For these reasons, the Chehalis Tribe urges the Committee to expeditiously report favorably on his nomination and for the U.S. Senate to swiftly confirm Mr. Kirkland as Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs.

Thank you for the opportunity to express the Tribe's support.

Sincerely,

HON. DUSTIN KLATUSH, CHAIRMAN

QUECHAN INDIAN TRIBE
July 10, 2025

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Schatz,

On behalf of the Quechan Tribe of the Ft. Yuma Indian Reservation ("Tribe"), I write to express our strong support for the nomination of William "Billy" Kirkland III, a citizen of the Navajo Nation, as the next Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. Mr. Kirkland's deep understanding of tribal governments, extensive leadership experience, and commitment to upholding tribal sovereignty make him an ideal candidate for this position.

The Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs plays a vital role in advising the Secretary of the Interior and fulfilling the federal government's trust obligations to tribal nations. It is imperative that the Assistant Secretary be someone who not only understands the unique positions of tribal governments but also possesses in-depth knowledge of the Department of the Interior and the federal government's responsibilities to Indian Country.

Throughout his career, Mr. Kirkland has demonstrated a strong commitment to Indian Country. As a citizen of the Navajo Nation, former Special Assistant to the President, and Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Mr. Kirkland brings both personal experience and professional expertise that will be essential to supporting tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

The Tribe looks forward to engaging with Mr. Kirkland upon his confirmation to protect and strengthen our government-to-government relationship and advance policies that support tribal nations. We remain committed to partnering with the Department of the Interior to uphold tribal sovereignty and address critical issues facing our communities.

We respectfully urge you to swiftly confirm Mr. Kirkland so that he may begin the important work of serving tribes. We appreciate your attention to this matter and your continued support of tribal nations.

Respectfully,

HON. JONATHAN E. KOTEEN, PRESIDENT

THE NAVAJO NATION
July 15, 2025

Dear Chair Murkowski and Vice Chair Schatz,

On behalf of the Navajo Nation, I write to express support for the confirmation of William "Billy" Kirkland to serve as the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs (AS-IA) in the Department of the Interior (DOI).

Mr. Kirkland is a member of the Navajo Nation and brings an understanding of tribal priorities, as well as a lived connection to the people and lands that the DOI is tasked with serving. His record of public service and private sector leadership makes him uniquely qualified to carry out the duties of this important role with vision, accountability, and respect for the sovereignty of tribal nations.

During his tenure in the Executive Office of President Trump, Mr. Kirkland played a role in elevating Native voices in the policymaking process. He assisted greatly in revitalizing the White House Council on Native American Affairs, and he

helped establish direct lines of communication between tribal leaders and senior federal officials. Mr. Kirkland's efforts also helped lead to President Trump's historic "Operation Lady Justice," aimed at addressing the longstanding Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples crisis in Indian Country.

Mr. Kirkland's efforts to bridge communication divides extends beyond his work at the White House. Among other achievements, he helped establish the Atlanta Braves Native American Working Group, creating meaningful dialogue between the organization and Native communities to promote cultural understanding and representation.

The responsibilities of the AS-IA are vast and consequential, encompassing the effective delivery of services to tribal communities, the upholding of treaty obligations, and the stewardship of natural and cultural resources. I am confident that Mr. Kirkland's leadership, experience, commitment, and cultural grounding will serve all tribes with integrity, and I look forward to working alongside Mr. Kirkland to advance essential priorities for all of Indian Country.

We are grateful to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs for holding the confirmation hearing for Mr. Kirkland, and the Navajo Nation supports his confirmation. *Ahéhee'* (Thank you).

Sincerely,

DR. BUU NYGREN, PRESIDENT

YUHAAVIATAM OF SAN MANUEL NATION
March 10, 2025

Dear Chair Murkowski and Vice Chair Schatz,

The Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation, formerly known as the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, supports the nomination of William "Billy" Kirkland III to serve as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior. Mr. Kirkland's experience working for President Trump and on Native American issues make him a strong candidate for this role.

Given the significant and quick changes being made throughout the federal government and at the Interior Department, we urge you to timely consider Mr. Kirkland's nomination. Mr. Kirkland previously served as the Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs in the White House from 2017 to 2021. During that time, we found him to be accessible and informative. We believe it is important that he be confirmed as soon as possible so he can help tribal governments navigate the many changes that are taking place.

Mr. Kirkland has demonstrated a good understanding of the unique government-to-government, trust relationship between Native American Tribes and the federal government. He also understands the challenges faced by tribal governments and our desire to streamline and lessen the bureaucracy while upholding the sacred trust responsibility to tribal nations.

Tribal governments play an important role in our local and regional economies, and we believe eliminating unnecessary federal regulations, streamlining federal funding mechanisms, growing economic development, and strengthening our rights of self-determination enhance our contributions within our regions. Mr. Kirkland understands these values and has a record of working collaboratively with tribal leaders on such issues as education, healthcare, and land management.

We urge you to act quickly and forward the nomination of William Kirkland to the full Senate for their approval.

Sincerely,

HON. LYNN R. VALBUENA, CHAIRWOMAN

STANDING ROCK SIOUX TRIBE
July 15, 2025

Dear Chair Murkowski and Vice Chair Schatz,

The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe supports Mr. William "Billy" Kirkland's nomination to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. His extensive experience and deep knowledge make him an exceptional candidate for this critical role. As a member of the Navajo Nation with previous White House experience, Mr. Kirkland possesses a unique understanding of the challenges Tribes face and has the necessary leadership skills to navigate the complex relationship between Tribal Nations and the Federal government.

The Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs plays a vital role in assisting the Secretary of the Interior with the Department's trust and Treaty responsibilities to Federally recognized Tribes and individual Tribal citizens. When Mr. Kirkland served during President Trump's first term, he engaged in government-to-government relations with Tribal Nations and connected Tribal leaders with agency leadership to help Tribal leadership advocate for priorities on law enforcement, healthcare, and economic development.

We are pleased to offer our full support for Mr. Kirkland's nomination and confirmation for Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

HON. JANET ALKIRE, CHAIRWOMAN

KOI NATION OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

July 11, 2025

Dear Chair Murkowski and Vice Chair Schatz,

On behalf of the Koi Nation of Northern California Tribal Council and the citizens of the Koi Nation, I am writing to express my strong support for the nomination of William Kirkland as Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs. Mr. Kirkland's career reflects a commitment to addressing the pressing needs of Tribal communities. I am confident that he is uniquely qualified to serve in this critical role.

Throughout his career, Mr. Kirkland has established a reputation for building bridges and engaging with Tribal leaders. These qualities are vital to ensuring the federal government meets its trust responsibilities to Tribal nations while supporting our self-governance and self-determination.

Moreover, Mr. Kirkland possesses the leadership skills, strategic vision, and passion necessary to navigate the multifaceted challenges inherent to Indian Affairs. His experience working alongside Tribal leaders and his commitment to the sovereignty of Tribal governments affirm his readiness to take on the responsibilities of Assistant Secretary.

I am confident that, under his leadership, the Department of Interior will continue to advance initiatives that honor Tribal sovereignty, foster sustainable development, and support the preservation of our cultural lifeways. His appointment would signal a renewed commitment to addressing the needs and aspirations of Native American communities with integrity and respect.

I respectfully urge the Committee's support of Mr. Kirkland's nomination. His expertise, experience, and record of leadership make him an exemplary candidate for this important position. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

HON. DARIN BELTRAN, CHAIRMAN

HOOPA VALLEY TRIBAL COUNCIL, HOOPA VALLEY TRIBE

February 20, 2025

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Schatz,

Thank you for Senator Murkowski's February 5, 2025, letter to Acting OMB Director Matthew Vaeth that urged him to protect the integrity of the federal trust relationship with Indian tribes and enforce the "statutory authorities, treaty, and/or trust obligations" of the United States to Indian tribes.

As the Committee on Indian Affairs considers William Kirkland's nomination to be the Department of the Interior's Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, we request that you seek assurances from Mr. Kirkland that he will be a voice in the Administration for fair and full consideration of issues affecting tribal rights and sovereignty.

We make this request with the understanding that the Department of the Interior includes numerous agencies with policy and funding objectives that often compete or conflict with the federal trust responsibility for vested tribal property rights in natural resources including water, fish, and wildlife, which are vital to our tribe's customs, traditions, culture and economy.

For example, Forrest Gerard, the first Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, wrote that the establishment of that post represented an

unparalleled opportunity for Indians to influence policy at the highest levels of the Department. The Assistant Secretary will participate more in policy formu-

lation in the Office of the Secretary and will be more directly involved with the Office of Management and Budget, and the Congress. Never before in the long history of Federal-Indian relations have the head of the Bureau been so strategically placed within the Executive Branch.¹

Assistant Secretary Gerard then stated what that meant for the federal trust responsibility.

I am going to take an active rather than a reactive position as to the trust obligation. And in order to accomplish this we are going to strengthen the capabilities of the Bureau to deal with trust responsibilities. This will mean increasing staffing in the area of natural resource specialists within the office of trust responsibilities. And I also will work to get additional staffing in the division of Indian Affairs in the office of the solicitor.²

Upon President Reagan's appointment of Ross O. Swimmer as the fourth Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs in 1985, Secretary Donald Hodel embraced Forrest Gerard's vision of the Assistant Secretary's role by acting promptly to ensure that the Department would fully account for its federal trust responsibilities. He advised his senior staff that any issue affecting Indian Affairs in any Department program could not be brought to his attention for decision without it first having been timely reviewed by Assistant Secretary Swimmer in consultation with the affected tribe or tribes.

We bring this to your attention because an Interior Department Agency, the Bureau of Reclamation, has devastated fisheries in which the Hoopa Valley Tribe has vested property rights that the United States holds in trust. The Bureau's construction and operation of irrigation projects on the Klamath and Trinity Rivers caused that damage, notwithstanding statutory protections for the fisheries on which we have relied since time immemorial.

Note especially that our tribe is the unique beneficiary of an explicit and specific statutory trust responsibility in federal reclamation law to restore Trinity River fishery to populations that existed prior to the construction and operation of the Central Valley Project's Trinity River Division in California. Central Valley Project Improvement Act, Public Law 102-57 5 Title XXXIV § 3406(b)(23) (1992).

Nonetheless, the Bureau of Reclamation has failed to fulfill that fiduciary restoration mandate, and the Klamath fishery will be adversely affected by Secretary Burgum's February 10, 2025, memorandum rescinding fishery protection measures on the Klamath River. The Secretary issued that memorandum without first obtaining the advice of a confirmed Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs or consultation with our Tribe.

Accordingly, we request you address the following questions to Mr. Kirkland at his confirmation hearing.

What steps will you take to ensure fair consideration and full protection of tribal trust resources and sovereignty affected by Interior Department agencies other than the Bureau of Indian Affairs?

Will you ask Secretary Burgum to suspend his February 10 decision on the Klamath River fishery until you have been confirmed, reviewed the matter with the affected tribes in the Klamath River Basin, and provided Secretary Burgum with your advice?

Will you ask Secretary Burgum to withhold other decisions that tribes advise will have adverse impacts on tribal trust resources until after you are confirmed and have had the chance to consider them in consultation with the affected Indian tribes?

Will you ask Secretary Burgum to advise his senior staff that any issue affecting Indian Affairs in any Department program shall not be brought to his attention for decision without it first having been timely reviewed by you in consultation with the affected tribe or tribes?

Your attention to this request is appreciated.

Sincerely,

¹https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/17/oa_monograph/chapter/3142224/pdf at page 350.

²*Id.*, at 348-349

HON. RYAN JACKSON, ACTING CHAIRMAN

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
July 14, 2025

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski, Vice Chairman Schatz, Ranking Member Heinrich, and Senator Luján,

I write as the Speaker of the 25th Navajo Nation Council to offer my support for Mr. William “Billy” Kirkland’s nomination to serve as the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs based on his extensive experience and knowledge working at the federal level with tribal nations across the country. As a citizen of the Navajo Nation, Mr. Kirkland understands the challenges of many tribes and how to navigate the complex working relations between the federal government and tribes.

The Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs is tasked with supporting Interior Secretary Doug Burgum as the chief steward of the trust relationship between the United States and tribes. When Mr. Kirkland served in a similar role in the previous Trump Administration, he was a key partner in engaging in government-to-government relations with tribes. He worked with and connected tribes with key officials and agencies across the federal government to empower tribes to advocate for our priorities, significantly on public safety, healthcare, and economic development. He clearly understands and respects tribal sovereignty and the importance of treaties. He has spent his career as a public servant, working for Indian Country and impoverished communities.

Mr. Kirkland’s vast knowledge, experience, and dedication make him a great candidate to oversee the Indian Affairs. He understands how tribes can navigate economic development efforts and federal permitting challenges. His experience over a broad range of industries and financing is valuable to the Department of the Interior and tribes.

I am pleased to offer my full support for Mr. Kirkland to serve as Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs. I thank you for your consideration and look forward to continuing our work together.

Sincerely,

HON. CRYSTALYNE CURLEY, SPEAKER

SHAKOPEE MDEWAKANTON SIOUX COMMUNITY
July 2, 2025

Dear Chairman Murkowski, Vice Chair Schatz, and Members of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs (SCIA),

On behalf of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, we are writing to express our support for the nomination of William “Billy” Kirkland, a citizen of the Navajo Nation, to serve as Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs at the U.S. Department of Interior (Interior). This position is critical to upholding the federal government’s trust and treaty responsibilities and ensuring the effective delivery of services to Tribal governments and their members.

During his tenure as Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Intergovernmental from 2017 to 2021, Mr. Kirkland earned the trust of many Tribal leaders by listening with respect, responding to concerns with action, and advocating for Tribal priorities throughout the administration. His understanding of the government-to-government relationship between Tribal governments and the United States federal government, along with his practical experience engaging directly with Tribal leaders and communities across the country, make him qualified for this role.

We are confident that Mr. Kirkland will bring his experience and values to the position of Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs and will serve Indian Country with integrity and dedication. For these reasons, we respectfully urge SCIA to approve Mr. Kirkland’s nomination.

Sincerely,

HON. COLE W. MILLER, CHAIRMAN

OSAGE MINERALS COUNCIL, OSAGE NATION
February 21, 2025

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Schatz:

The Osage Minerals Council strongly supports the nomination of William “Billy” Kirkland to be the next the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs within the Department of the Interior. Mr. Kirkland previously served within the White House as a Special Assistant to President Trump and as a Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs from 2017 to 2021. Mr. Kirkland knows how to get things done in Washington, D.C. and, as a member of the Navajo Nation, he understands the importance of upholding the Federal government’s trust and treaty responsibilities.

The Osage Minerals Council is the elected tribal governing body recognized under the Osage Allotment Act of June 28, 1906 and the Osage Nation Constitution to administer, develop, and protect the Osage Mineral Estate. The Osage Mineral Estate is one of the oldest and longest producing oil fields in the United States. Maintaining production of oil and gas resources, overcoming permitting challenges, and protecting the Osage Mineral Estate are our top priorities.

We look forward to working with Mr. Kirkland to promote efficient and responsible permitting processes in our work to develop and produce oil and gas resources within our Osage Mineral Estate. Mr. Kirkland’s own tribe, the Navajo Nation, has extensive experience in energy development and we believe this experience will help inform Mr. Kirkland’s leadership efforts within Interior and across all the Federal agencies involved in Indian energy development.

Indian energy must be included in the Administration’s Energy Dominance Agenda and we believe that Mr. Kirkland would be an important ally and supporter of Indian energy development which benefits our communities as well as the United States as a whole. We strongly support Billy Kirkland as the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs.

Sincerely,

HON. MYRON RED EAGLE, CHAIRMAN

CALISTA CORPORATION

February 21, 2025

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Schatz:

I write in support of the nomination of William “Billy” Kirkland as the Assistant Secretary of Interior for Indian Affairs.

Mr. Kirkland, a citizen of the Navajo Nation, has experience working in President Trump’s first Administration as a Special Assistant to the President. We are optimistic that, if confirmed, he will carry out with enthusiasm and effectiveness the federal government’s treaty, trust, and statutory responsibilities on behalf of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian people and our nations.

As you know, President Trump has moved quickly on a number of national initiatives that have had an impact on the federal funding and services provided to Tribal governments and Native people. We urge you to move quickly to conduct Mr. Kirkland’s confirmation hearing and to report him favorably to the full Senate. The opportunities and challenges presented by the new Administration are best addressed if the President has his team in place as soon as possible, and that includes Mr. Kirkland.

Quyana (*Thank you* in Yugtun—the Yup’ik language) for the opportunity to share this recommendation with you.

Respectfully,

ANDREW GUY, PRESIDENT/CEO

FOREST COUNTY POTAWATOMI COMMUNITY

February 20, 2025

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Vice-Chairman Schatz:

I am writing on behalf of the Forest County Potawatomi Community (FCPC) to support the appointment and confirmation of William “Billy” Kirkland for Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs within the U.S. Department of the Interior. Mr. Kirkland is a citizen of the Navajo Nation, which has a long history of working with the United States toward tribal self-governance and self-determination. Mr. Kirkland also has experience working in federal service, particularly with the Trump administration, and will be an important voice to support programs that impact tribes and tribal citizens.

Mr. Kirkland is well-qualified to be the primary steward of the United States’ trust and treaty obligations to tribes. He served as Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs from 2017 to 2021, during which he regularly met with tribal leaders, helping them to navigate the federal bu-

reaucracy to achieve their goals. Further, Mr. Kirkland has worked with tribal governments in support of various economic development enterprises, and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of Georgia. We believe this background, along with his Navajo Nation citizenship, have provided Mr. Kirkland a clear understanding of the United States' duties and obligations to tribal nations, which were bargained for in exchange for precious land, water, and mineral resources that are now largely managed by the Department of the Interior.

We fully support the confirmation of Billy Kirkland to serve as the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs within the U.S. Department of the Interior, and look forward to working with him to advance the interests of tribal nations across the United States.

Sincerely,

HON. JAMES A. CRAWFORD, CHAIRMAN

PORT GAMBLE S'KLALLAM TRIBE

July 7, 2025

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Schatz,

I write today in support of the nomination of Billy Kirkland to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior. I am thrilled about his nomination and the potential for him to serve the Trump Administration and Indian Country in this capacity.

The Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs plays a vital role in assisting and advising the Secretary of the Interior in fulfilling the Department's trust and treaty obligations. Their work necessitates strengthening the government-to-government/nation-to-nation relationship between the Federal Government and American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes, protecting Tribal trust assets, advocating for policies that uphold and enhance Tribal sovereignty, and administering the laws, regulations, and functions of the office to all 574 federally recognized Tribal Nations. I believe Mr. Kirkland demonstrates a strong ability to succeed in fulfilling these numerous responsibilities, and his appointment is a step towards enhancing the federal-Tribal partnership and addressing the pressing needs of our communities.

I am pleased to join many Tribal leaders and Indian organizations in expressing my wholehearted support for Mr. Kirkland and believe that he will excel in the role of Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. He is a proud American and a citizen of the Navajo Nation, with invaluable policy experience, having previously served as Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs during the Trump Administration. He has established a strong reputation and consistently demonstrated his ability to be an effective leader in this pivotal position.

I look forward to his swift confirmation by the U.S. Senate and future opportunities to work together on behalf of our Country's sovereign Tribal Nations.

Sincerely,

HON. AMBER CALDERA, CHAIRWOMAN

LUMBEE TRIBE OF NORTH CAROLINA

July 9, 2025

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Schatz:

On behalf of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, I am writing to express our strong support for William "Billy" Kirkland to be Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs in the Department of the Interior. Mr. Kirkland has a long and dedicated history supporting Indian tribes in both the public and private sectors.

An enrolled member of the Navajo Nation, Mr. Kirkland understands the importance of tribal sovereignty, the Federal trust responsibility, and the importance of the government-to-government relationship the United States maintains with tribal governments.

Mr. Kirkland served in President Trump's first administration as the Director of Intergovernmental Affairs in the White House. In that role, Mr. Kirkland advanced the President's vision of reducing bureaucracy, increasing energy dominance, and supporting economic development in tribal communities. Mr. Kirkland was also a strong supporter of funding for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women initiative and the creation of Operation Lady Justice in the Department of the Interior.

Mr. Kirkland's confirmation will complement the leadership team that President Trump and Secretary Burgum have put in place at the Department of the Interior. The Lumbee Tribe wholeheartedly endorses his nomination and encourages the Committee to swiftly move the nomination to the Senate for final consideration.

Sincerely,

HON. JOHN L. LOWERY, TRIBAL CHAIRMAN

CHEROKEE NATION
July 9, 2025

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Schatz:

I write today on behalf of Cherokee Nation to express the Nation's support for Senate confirmation of Mr. William "Billy" Kirkland as Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior. Mr. Kirkland has a long track record of supporting Indian Tribes both in the public and the private sectors.

Mr. Kirkland is an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation. Mr. Kirkland understands the importance of tribal sovereignty, the federal trust responsibility, tribal treaties, and the importance of the government-to-government relationships between federally recognized Indian Tribes and the United States. Mr. Kirkland served in President Trump's first administration and as Special Assistant to the President and the Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs for the White House. In that role, Mr. Kirkland supported the President's vision of reducing bureaucracy, increasing energy dominance, and supporting economic development opportunities for Tribes. Mr. Kirkland was a strong supporter of funding for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and the creation of Operation Lady Justice at the Department of the Interior.

Mr. Kirkland's confirmation will complement the excellent leadership team that President Trump and Secretary Burgum have put in place at the Department of the Interior. We wholeheartedly endorse his nomination and encourage his swift confirmation by the United States Senate for this position of such critical importance to Indian Country.

Sincerely,

HON. CHUCK HOSKIN, JR., PRINCIPAL CHIEF

FORT INDEPENDENCE INDIAN RESERVATION
June 26, 2025

Dear Madame Chairwoman:

On behalf of the tribal leadership of the Fort Independence Indian Reservation, I write in support of the nomination of William Kirkland for the position Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs.

Mr. Kirkland is a strong supporter of federal policies regarding tribal sovereignty and self determination and is extremely well qualified for this important position. I am confident, Mr. Kirkland will help foster enhanced relations between the administration and Indian Country.

On behalf of the Fort Independence Indian Reservation, I respectfully urge you to confirm Mr. Kirkland's nomination.

Sincerely,

HON. CARL DAHLBERG, TRIBAL CHAIRMAN

BIG SANDY RANCHERIA
June 30, 2025

Dear Madame Chairwoman:

On behalf of the tribal leadership of the Big Sandy Band of Western Mono Indians, I write in support of the nomination of William Kirkland for Assistant Secretary of the Department of the Interior for Indian Affairs.

Mr. Kirkland is a strong supporter of federal policies regarding tribal sovereignty and self determination and is extremely well qualified for this important position. I am confident, Mr. Kirkland will help foster enhanced relations between the administration and Indian Country.

On behalf of the Big Sandy Band of Western Mono Indians, I respectfully urge you to confirm Mr. Kirkland's nomination.

Sincerely,

HON. ELIZABETH HUTCHINS, CHAIRPERSON

ALTURAS INDIAN RANCHERIA
June 26, 2025

Dear Madame Chairwoman:

On behalf of the tribal leadership of the Alturas Indian Rancheria, I write in support of the nomination of William Kirkland for the position Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs.

Mr. Kirkland is a strong supporter of federal policies regarding tribal sovereignty and self determination and is extremely well qualified for this important position. I am confident, Mr. Kirkland will help foster enhanced relations between the administration and Indian Country.

On behalf of the Alturas Indian Rancheria, I respectfully urge you to confirm Mr. Kirkland's nomination.

Sincerely,

HON. PHILLIP DEL ROSA, CHAIRMAN

THE CATAWBA NATION
July 7, 2025

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Schatz,

I write today in support of the nomination of Billy Kirkland to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior. I am thrilled at his nomination and potential to serve the Trump Administration and Indian Country in this capacity.

The Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs plays a vital role in assisting and advising the Secretary of the Interior in fulfilling the Department's trust and treaty obligations. Their work necessitates strengthening the government-to-government/nation-to-nation relationship between the Federal Government and American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes, protecting Tribal trust assets, advocating for policies that uphold and enhance Tribal sovereignty, and administering the laws, regulations, and functions of the office to all 574 federally recognized Tribal Nations. I believe Mr. Kirkland demonstrates a strong ability to succeed in fulfilling these responsibilities, and his appointment is a step towards enhancing the federal-Tribal partnership and addressing the pressing needs of our communities.

I am pleased to join many Tribal leaders and Indian organizations in expressing my wholehearted support for Mr. Kirkland and believe that he will excel in the role of Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. He is a proud American and a Navajo Nation citizen with invaluable policy experience, having previously served as Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs during the previous Trump Administration. He has established a strong reputation and consistently demonstrated his ability to be an effective leader in this pivotal position.

I look forward to his swift confirmation by the U.S. Senate and future opportunities to work together on behalf of our Country's sovereign Tribal Nations.

Sincerely,

HON. BRIAN HARRIS, CHIEF

GREENVILLE RANCHERIA
July 7, 2025

Dear Madame Chairwoman:

On behalf of the tribal leadership of the Greenville Rancheria, I write in support of the nomination of William Kirkland for Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs.

Mr. Kirkland is a strong supporter of federal policies regarding tribal sovereignty and self determination and is extremely well qualified for this important position. I am confident, Mr. Kirkland will help foster enhanced relations between the administration and Indian Country.

On behalf of the Greenville Rancheria, I respectfully urge you to confirm Mr. Kirkland's nomination.

Sincerely,

HON. KYLE SELF, CHAIRMAN

FLANDREAU SANTEE SIOUX TRIBE
July 7, 2025

Dear Madame Chairwoman:

On behalf of the tribal leadership of the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, I write in support of the nomination of William Kirkland for the position Secretary of Interior for Indian Affairs.

Mr. Kirkland is a strong supporter of federal policies regarding tribal sovereignty and self determination and is extremely well qualified for this important position. I am confident, Mr. Kirkland will help foster enhanced relations between the administration and Indian Country.

On behalf of the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, I respectfully urge you to confirm Mr. Kirkland's nomination.

Sincerely,

HON. ANTHONY REIDER, PRESIDENT

MILLE LACS BAND OF OJIBWE INDIANS
June 23, 2025

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Schatz,

On behalf of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, I am writing to express our support for the nomination of William Kirkland, a citizen of the Navajo Nation, to be the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior. The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe ("MLBO" or "Band") is a federally-recognized, sovereign, and independent Indian Tribal Government with approximately 5,000 members. The Band is responsible for providing critical governmental services to Band members, including programs providing healthcare, public safety, land management, housing, and education services across its 61,000-acre Reservation in East-Central Minnesota.

We believe Mr. Kirkland brings leadership experience in areas relevant to Indian Affairs, having previously served as Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs from 2017 to 2021. The Band joins with Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren in endorsing Mr. Kirkland's nomination given his prior experience and his broad support throughout Indian Country. His track record indicates a personal commitment to building and maintaining strong relationships with Tribal leaders. The Mille Lacs Band is confident that Kirkland will be the right choice in fulfilling the treaty and trust responsibilities to Tribal Nations, and in advancing the enduring federal policies of Indian Self-Determination and Tribal Self-Governance.

This is the type of supportive leadership that we hope to have in Washington, D.C. For this reason, we encourage the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to swiftly approve the nomination of Mr. Kirkland as Interior's Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs and to promptly secure confirmation of his nomination by the full U.S. Senate.

Miigwech,

HON. VIRGIL WIND, CHIEF EXECUTIVE

PICAYUNE RANCHERIA OF THE CHUKCHANSI INDIANS
June 25, 2025

Dear Members of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for William "Billy" Kirkland's nomination as the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs. As someone deeply committed to advancing the welfare of Native American communities, I am confident that Mr. Kirkland possesses the expertise, vision, and dedication necessary to effectively serve in this critical role.

Billy Kirkland has a long and distinguished record of public service, especially in his work with Indigenous communities. His experience in both policy and advocacy has provided him with a unique understanding of the challenges facing Native Americans, as well as the innovative solutions needed to address these challenges. Throughout his career, Mr. Kirkland has demonstrated commitment to empowering tribal governments and advancing economic development, education, and health initiatives that uplift Native communities.

One of the most impressive aspects of Mr. Kirkland's work is his ability to build meaningful relationships and collaborate across diverse sectors. He has proven his capacity to work effectively with tribal leaders and other stakeholders to promote sustainable and impactful initiatives.

Billy Kirkland's nomination comes at a time when it is essential to have a leader in the Department of the Interior who is not only knowledgeable but also passionate about advancing the interests of Native communities. I have no doubt that his leadership will continue to bring forward the progress needed to ensure the wellbeing and prosperity of Native peoples for generations to come. I strongly urge the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to confirm Billy. Kirkland as the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs. His qualifications, integrity, and commitment to tribal sovereignty make him an outstanding choice for this important position.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to the opportunity to see Mr. Kirkland's continued leadership in this vital role.

Sincerely,

HON. TRACEY HOPKINS, CHAIRWOMAN

COOK INLET TRIBAL COUNCIL
June 27, 2025

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Schatz:

On behalf of Cook Inlet Tribal Council, I am writing to express my strong support for Mr. William "Billy" Kirkland for the position of Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior. Mr. Kirkland has a long and dedicated history supporting Tribes both in the public and private sectors.

Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC) is a Tribal nonprofit organization serving Alaska Native and American Indian people residing in the Cook Inlet region of southcentral Alaska. Since its creation in 1983, CITC has developed an extensive array of culturally responsive workforce development, job placement, education, treatment, and child welfare programming serving over 10,000 people annually.

Mr. Kirkland is an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation. Mr. Kirkland understands the importance of Tribal sovereignty, trust responsibility, and government-to-government relationships. Previously, Mr. Kirkland served in President Trump's first administration and as the Director of Intergovernmental Affairs for the White House. In that role, Mr. Kirkland supported the President's vision of reducing bureaucracy, increasing energy dominance, and supporting economic development opportunities for Tribes. Mr. Kirkland was a strong supporter of funding for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and the creation of Operation Lady Justice at the Department of the Interior.

Mr. Kirkland's confirmation will complement the leadership team that President Trump and Secretary Burgum have put in place at the Department of the Interior. I wholeheartedly endorse his nomination and encourage his swift confirmation for this critical position.

If you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your continued leadership and commitment to advancing the well-being and sovereignty of Tribal Nations.

Sincerely,

HON. GLORIA O'NEILL, PRESIDENT/CEO

MOAPA BAND OF PAIUTES
June 27, 2025

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Schatz:

On behalf of the Moapa Band of Paiutes, I am writing to express my strong support for Mr. William "Billy" Kirkland for the position of Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior. Mr. Kirkland has a long and dedicated history supporting tribes both in the public and private sectors.

Mr. Kirkland is an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation. Mr. Kirkland understands the importance of tribal sovereignty, trust responsibility, and the importance of government-to-government relationships. Previously, Mr. Kirkland served in President Trump's first administration and as the Director of Intergovernmental Affairs for the White House. In that role, Mr. Kirkland supported the President's vision of reducing bureaucracy, increasing energy dominance, and supporting economic development opportunities for Tribes. Mr. Kirkland was a strong supporter of funding for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and the creation of Operation Lady Justice at the Department of the Interior.

Mr. Kirkland's confirmation will complement the leadership team that President Trump and Secretary Burgum have put in place at the Department of the Interior. I wholeheartedly endorse his nomination and encourage his swift confirmation for this critical position.

Sincerely,

HON. MARIO MONROE, TRIBAL CHAIRMAN

HABEMATOLEL POMO OF UPPER LAKE
June 19, 2025

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski:

The Habematolel Pomo of Upper Lake is a federally recognized Indian tribe located in a remote, rural area of California. We have emerged from an attempted termination under the California Rancheria Act to be an economic leader in our rural community reinjecting millions of dollars into a community and region that has traditionally been one of the poorest in California. As a nearly terminated tribe, our interactions with the Bureau of Indian Affairs are an integral aspect of rebuilding our nation.

We have carefully reviewed the qualifications and past actions of William "Billy" Kirkland. After that review, our Executive Council (the elected governing body of our tribe) unanimously supports his appointment as the Assistant Secretary of the Interior—Indian Affairs (ASIA) at the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI). We have determined that as a citizen of the Navajo Nation with a unique blend of federal experience, business insight, and tribal knowledge, Mr. Kirkland will bring a perspective to the ASIA position that will benefit our Tribe and all of Indian Country.

Mr. Kirkland's prior service in the White House and his demonstrated commitment to maintaining open lines of communication with Tribal Nations show that he understands the importance of trust, sovereignty, and government-to-government engagement. Indian Country faces complex challenges, and it is encouraging to see the nomination of someone who not only has direct tribal connections, but also a proven track record of high-level service and outreach. We are confident that Mr. Kirkland will bring stable leadership, thoughtful direction, and a collaborative spirit to the role—qualities that are essential for advancing self-determination, upholding tribal sovereignty, and strengthening the federal-tribal relationship.

We urge the Committee to move forward with this nomination without delay. The position of Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs is too important to remain vacant at a time when Indian Country needs strong, steady leadership.

Sincerely,

HON. DANIELLE CIRELLI, CHAIRPERSON

INŪPIAT COMMUNITY OF THE ARCTIC SLOPE
June 24, 2025

Dear Chair Murkowski, Vice Chair Schatz, and Members of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs (SCIA),

On behalf of the Inūpiat Community of the Arctic Slope (ICAS), we are writing to support the nomination of William "Billy" Kirkland to serve as Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs at the U.S. Department of Interior (Interior). This position is critical to upholding the federal government's trust and treaty responsibilities and ensuring the effective delivery of services to Tribal governments and their members. As a member of the Navajo Nation, Mr. Kirkland understands firsthand the importance of this position.

ICAS appreciated the commitment Mr. Kirkland had to Indian Country throughout his tenure as Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs from 2017 to 2021. Mr. Kirkland listened to Tribes with respect, responded to concerns with action, and advocated the views of Indian Country to the President and throughout the federal government.

As Tribal governments continue to face significant challenges and opportunities—from land and resource stewardship to economic development—leadership that is responsive, experienced, and grounded in respect for Tribal sovereignty is more important than ever. We are confident that Mr. Kirkland has the experience, skills, and values required to effectively serve as Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs. For this reason, we respectfully urge SCIA to approve Mr. Kirkland's nomination.

Sincerely,

HON. NICOLE WOJCIECHOWSKI, PRESIDENT

KIOWA TRIBE
June 24, 2025

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski;

On behalf of the Kiowa Executive Branch, I write in support of the nomination of William Kirkland for the position of Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs.

Mr. Kirkland is a strong supporter of federal policies regarding tribal sovereignty and self-determination and is extremely well qualified for this important position. The Kiowa Tribe Executive Branch is confident Mr. Kirkland will help foster enhanced relations between the Tribal Nation Governments, the Trump Administration, and Congress.

I respectfully urge you to confirm the nomination of Mr. Kirkland.

Sincerely,

HON. DAVID SULLIVAN, VICE CHAIRMAN

QUAPAW NATION
June 24, 2025

Dear Madame Chairwoman,

We write to you today to offer our strong support for Mr. William Kirkland's nomination to serve as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the U.S. Department of the Interior. Mr. Kirkland brings with him a deep understanding of Indian Country, grounded experience working with Tribal Nations, and a lifelong commitment to advancing the sovereignty, rights, and well-being of Native peoples.

Throughout his distinguished career, Mr. Kirkland has demonstrated the vision, leadership, and diplomacy required for this critical role. He has built meaningful relationships with Tribal leaders, listened to diverse perspectives across Indian Country, and consistently advocated for policies that honor Tribal sovereignty and foster self-determination. His integrity, cultural awareness, and strong administrative skills make him uniquely qualified to serve in this capacity.

Indian Country deserves leadership that understands the complex challenges our communities face: from protecting treaty rights and improving infrastructure to strengthening Tribal governments and supporting the next generation. Mr. Kirkland has not only shown his capacity to meet these challenges, but has done so with humility and collaboration.

On behalf of the Quapaw Nation, we respectfully urge you to support and advance Mr. Kirkland's confirmation. His appointment would bring a principled, knowledgeable, and dedicated leader to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, someone Indian Country can trust to move us forward with respect and partnership.

Thank you for your continued advocacy for Alaska Native and American Indian communities, and your thoughtful consideration of this important nomination.

Sincerely,

HON. KATHRYN WENA SUPERNOW, CHAIR

GABRIELINO/TONGVA NATION
June 20, 2025

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Schatz:

On behalf of the Gabrielino/Tongva Nation, I am writing to express my strong support for Mr. William "Billy" Kirkland for the position of Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior. Mr. Kirkland has a long and dedicated history supporting tribes both in the public and private sectors.

Mr. Kirkland is an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation. Mr. Kirkland understands the importance of tribal sovereignty, trust responsibility, and the importance of government-to-government relationships. Previously, Mr. Kirkland served in President Trump's first administration and as the Director of Intergovernmental Affairs for the White House. In that role, Mr. Kirkland supported the President's vision of reducing bureaucracy, increasing energy dominance, and supporting economic development opportunities for Tribes. Mr. Kirkland was a strong supporter of funding for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and the creation of Operation Lady Justice at the Department of the Interior.

Mr. Kirkland's confirmation will complement the leadership team that President Trump and Secretary Burgum have put in place at the Department of the Interior.

I wholeheartedly endorse his nomination and encourage his swift confirmation for this critical position.

Sincerely,

HON. SANDONNE GOAD, TRIBAL COUNCIL CHAIRWOMAN

SCHAGHTICOKE TRIBAL NATION

June 24, 2025

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Schatz:

On behalf of the Schaghticoke Tribal Nation, I am writing to express my strong support for Mr. Wiltiam “Billy” Kirkland for the position of Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior. Mr. Kirkland has a long and dedicated history supporting tribes both in the public and private sectors.

Mr. Kirkland is an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation. Mr. Kirkland understands the importance of tribal sovereignty, trust responsibility, and the importance of government-to-government relationships. Previously, Mr. Kirkland served in President Trump’s first administration and as the Director of Intergovernmental Affairs for the White House, in that role, Mr. Kirkland supported the President’s vision of reducing bureaucracy, increasing energy dominance, and supporting economic development opportunities for Tribes. Mr. Kirkland was a strong supporter of funding for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and the creation of Operation Lady Justice at the Department of the Interior.

Mr. Kirkland’s confirmation will complement the leadership team that President Trump and Secretary Burgum have put in place at the Department of the Interior. I wholeheartedly endorse his nomination and encourage his swift confirmation for this critical position.

Sincerely,

HON. RICHARD VELKY, CHIEF

TURTLE MOUNTAIN BAND OF CHIPPEWA INDIANS

June 20, 2025

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Schatz:

On behalf of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians, I am writing to express my strong support for Mr. Wiltiam “Billy” Kirkland for the position of Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior. Mr. Kirkland has a long and dedicated history supporting tribes both in the public and private sectors.

Mr. Kirkland is an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation. Mr. Kirkland understands the importance of tribal sovereignty, trust responsibility, and the importance of government-to-government relationships. Previously, Mr. Kirkland served in President Trump’s first administration and as the Director of Intergovernmental Affairs for the White House, in that role, Mr. Kirkland supported the President’s vision of reducing bureaucracy, increasing energy dominance, and supporting economic development opportunities for Tribes. Mr. Kirkland was a strong supporter of funding for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and the creation of Operation Lady Justice at the Department of the Interior.

Mr. Kirkland’s confirmation will complement the leadership team that President Trump and Secretary Burgum have put in place at the Department of the Interior. I wholeheartedly endorse his nomination and encourage his swift confirmation for this critical position.

Sincerely,

HON. JAMIE S. AZURE, TRIBAL CHAIRMAN

TUNICA-BILOXI TRIBE

June 20, 2025

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Schatz,

On behalf of the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana, I write to express my full support for the nomination of Mr. William “Billy” Kirkland to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Mr. Kirkland is not only a dedicated public servant, but a man who understands what it means to work with Indian Country, not just for it. As an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation, he carries with him lived experience and an appreciation for the challenges and opportunities that tribal nations face every day. He has consist-

ently demonstrated a deep respect for tribal sovereignty, the federal trust responsibility, and the importance of meaningful government-to-government relationships.

During his prior service in the Trump Administration, including his time as Director of Intergovernmental Affairs at the White House, Mr. Kirkland was a reliable and effective partner to tribal leaders. Whether advancing economic development, addressing the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, or advocating for streamlined access to federal programs, he worked to ensure that tribes were heard, respected, and empowered.

This nomination represents not just a personnel decision, but an opportunity to continue building a team at the Department of the Interior that understands the unique political and cultural status of tribal nations. Mr. Kirkland's leadership, experience, and trust within Indian Country will be an asset to the Department and to this Administration. I urge the Committee to move swiftly in confirming Mr. Kirkland to this critical position. Indian Country deserves strong, principled leadership—and we see that in Billy Kirkland.

With sincere respect,

HON. MARSHALL PIERITE, CHAIRMAN/CEO

OSAGE NATION
June 23, 2025

Dear Chairwoman Murkoswki:

As Principal Chief of the Osage Nation, I write in support of the nomination of William Kirkland for the position of Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs.

Mr. Kirkland is a strong supporter of federal policies regarding tribal sovereignty and self-determination and is extremely well qualified for this important position. I am confident Mr. Kirkland will help foster enhanced relations between the tribal nation governments and the administration and congress.

I respectfully urge you to confirm the nomination of Mr. Kirkland.

Sincerely,

HON. GEOFFREY M. STANDING BEAR, PRINCIPAL CHIEF

TARA M. SWEENEY
June 20, 2025

Dear Chair Murkowski and Distinguished Members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs:

I am writing in support of William "Billy" Kirkland's nomination by President Trump to be the 15th Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs within the Department of the Interior.

Mr. Kirkland has extensive experience with the Trump Administration, serving in the first Trump Administration (45) as the Special Assistant to the President of the United States, as well as his role as Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs at the White House.

These public service roles provided Mr. Kirkland with a greater understanding of the federal policies impacting Indian Country and Alaska Native communities.

Further, I appreciate Mr. Kirkland's genuine desire to understand the complexities of Alaska Native peoples, communities and governance. William understands that it is not effective to apply a one-size-fits-all approach to federal Indian policy, and that he will be a strong voice inside the Trump Administration for all of Indian Country and Alaska Natives.

I join the chorus of Native and congressional leaders across the United States applauding President Trump for nominating William Kirkland.

Mr. Kirkland has a strong team surrounding him at the Department of the Interior with Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Scott Davis and Deputy Assistant Secretary Ken Bellmard. His leadership will compliment Secretary Burgum and President Trump's initiatives to empower Native American communities.

Further, I believe they will continue to work on policy that promotes tribal sovereignty, and responsibly and respectfully uphold the treaty and trust obligations the Department of the Interior has with Indian Country.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my support for Mr. Kirkland with the committee. The Indian Affairs hallway needs a complete team in order to effectively serve our Native peoples. Approving his nomination is one step closer to strengthening Indian Affairs.

Quyanaqpak,

HON. TARA M. SWEENEY, 13TH ASSISTANT SECRETARY—INDIAN AFFAIRS

COLT COALITION OF LARGE TRIBES

February 4, 2025

Dear Chairman Murkowski, Chairman Lee, Vice Chairman Schatz and Ranking Member Heinrich,

I write as Chairman of the Coalition of Large Tribes (COLT)—an intertribal organization representing the interests of the more than 50 tribes with reservations of 100,000 acres or more, encompassing more than 95 percent of the Indian Country lands and more than half the Native American population—to deliver COLT's enthusiastic endorsement of Mr. William "Billy" Kirkland's nomination to serve as the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs. A citizen of the Navajo Nation, Billy is one of our own and has lived and breathed the joys and challenges of large land base tribes his entire life. From the cradle, he has learned to respect and honor Treaties as the supreme law of the land. From our perspective, there is no better nominee to serve Indian Country in this pivotal role.

The Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs is the person who will support Secretary Burgum as the chief steward of the trust relationship between the United States and Indian tribes. When Billy served in a similar role in the first Trump White House team, Billy was a tremendous representative for the President in engaging in government-to-government relations with tribes. COLT tribal leaders dealt with him often. He was accessible. He was helpful. He was a good listener. Importantly, he was also always able to connect us with the right folks across the federal government to help us advocate for our tribes' priorities, significantly on public safety, healthcare and economic development. He clearly understands and respects tribal sovereignty and Treaties. He has spent his career as a public servant, working for Indian Country and other poor communities. One issue to which he has given a great deal of his time, and which COLT also strongly supports as a priority, is religious freedom. Having an Assistant Secretary with such deep experience on protecting sacred sites and tribal cultural practices would be tremendous.

COLT is thrilled to see Billy nominated to the Secretary's Office. He is someone in whom we have complete trust and confidence. We do not expect him to always agree with every position a tribe or tribes might advance, but we know he will listen and be ready to offer compromises and creative solutions to do absolutely the best he can for tribes.

We also appreciate his professional and leadership experience. Like Secretary Burgum, Billy too knows technology and he knows energy. He has lived tribal economic development efforts and understands navigating federal permitting challenges. Billy is always about lifting up others. His experience over a broad range of industries and financing deals is a rare and valuable set of skills. He is exactly the kind of leader tribes need at the Interior Department.

Billy Kirkland has COLT's highest recommendation and endorsement to serve as Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs.

Very Respectfully,

HON. J. GARRET RENVILLE, COLT CHAIRMAN; CHAIRMAN, SISSETON-
WAHPETON OYATE, LAKE TRAVERSE RESERVATION

UNITED KEETOOWAH BAND OF CHEROKEE INDIANS

March 24, 2025

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Shatz:

Siyo!

I write on behalf of the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma, a federally recognized Tribe comprising traditional Cherokee People with headquarters on the Cherokee Reservation in northeastern Oklahoma. We applaud President Trump for the nomination of William "Billy" Kirkland to serve as Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs.

We look forward to working with President Trump, Secretary Burgum and, upon his confirmation, Assistant Secretary Kirkland, and this Committee as we all strive to achieve self-determination and financial independence in Indian Country.

We respectfully urge the Committee to advance Mr. Kirkland's confirmation as soon as practicable. Wado!

Respectfully,

HON. JEFF WACOCHE, CHIEF

COW CREEK BAND OF UMPQUA TRIBE OF INDIANS
March 18, 2025

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Brian Schatz:

I write on behalf of the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians in support of William "Billy" Kirkland to serve as the next U.S. Department of the Interior Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs. We are pleased by his nomination to serve the Trump Administration and Tribal nations in this capacity.

The Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs is charged with ensuring that the United States upholds its trust and treaty responsibilities to Tribal nations. That includes fostering Tribal economic development within a Tribe's aboriginal and reservation homelands, and protecting against territorial or other encroachments that interfere with a Tribe's efforts towards self-reliance.

We look forward to Mr. Kirkland's swift confirmation by the U.S. Senate and to working with him to protect Tribal homelands and improve the daily lives of Cow Creek Tribal citizens.

Sincerely,

HON. CARLA KEENE, CHAIRMAN

KOOTENAI TRIBE OF IDAHO
February 26, 2025

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Schatz:

On behalf of the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, I write in support of the nomination of William "Billy" Kirkland as the Assistant Secretary of Interior for Indian Affairs.

Mr. Kirkland, a citizen of the Navajo Nation, has experience working in President Trump's first Administration as a Special Assistant to the President. We are optimistic that, if confirmed, he will carry out with enthusiasm and effectiveness the federal government's treaty, trust, and statutory responsibilities on behalf of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian people and our nations.

As you know, President Trump has moved quickly on a number of national initiatives that have had an impact on the federal funding and services provided to Tribal governments and Native people. We urge you to move quickly to conduct Mr. Kirkland's confirmation hearing and to report him favorably to the full Senate. The opportunities and challenges presented by the new Administration are best addressed if the President has his team in place as soon as possible, and that includes Mr. Kirkland.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this recommendation with you.

Sincerely,

HON. JENNIFER PORTER, CHAIRWOMAN

LUMMI INDIAN BUSINESS COUNCIL
March 7, 2025

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Schatz:

On behalf of the Chairman of Lummi Nation, I write in support of the nomination of William "Billy" Kirkland as the Assistant Secretary of Interior for Indian Affairs.

Mr. Kirkland, a citizen of the Navajo Nation, has experience working in President Trump's first Administration as a Special Assistant to the President. We are optimistic that, if confirmed, he will carry out with enthusiasm and effectiveness the federal government's treaty, trust, and statutory responsibilities on behalf of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian people and our nations.

As you know, President Trump has moved quickly on a number of national initiatives that have had an impact on the federal funding and services provided to Tribal governments and Native people. We urge you to move quickly to conduct Mr. Kirkland's confirmation hearing and to report him favorably to the full Senate. The opportunities and challenges presented by the new Administration are best addressed if the President has his team in place as soon as possible, and that includes Mr. Kirkland.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this recommendation with you.

Sincerely,

HON. ANTHONY (TONY) HILLAIRE, CHAIRMAN, LUMMI NATION

PRAIRIE BAND POTAWATOMI NATION
February 21, 2025

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Schatz:

On behalf of Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, I write in support of the nomination of William “Billy” Kirkland as the Assistant Secretary of Interior for Indian Affairs.

Mr. Kirkland, a citizen of the Navajo Nation, has experience working in President Trump’s first Administration as a Special Assistant to the President. We are optimistic that, if confirmed, he will carry out with enthusiasm and effectiveness the federal government’s treaty, trust, and statutory responsibilities on behalf of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian people and our nations.

As you know, President Trump has moved quickly on a number of national initiatives that have had an impact on the federal funding and services provided to Tribal governments and Native people. We urge you to move quickly to conduct Mr. Kirkland’s confirmation hearing and to report him favorably to the full Senate. The opportunities and challenges presented by the new Administration are best addressed if the President has his team in place as soon as possible, and that includes Mr. Kirkland.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this recommendation with you.

Sincerely,

HON. JOSEPH P. RUPNICK, TRIBAL COUNCIL CHAIRMAN

KICKAPOO TRADITIONAL TRIBE OF TEXAS
February 20, 2025

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Schatz:

On behalf of the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas, I write in support of the nomination of William “Billy” Kirkland as the Assistant Secretary of Interior for Indian Affairs.

Mr. Kirkland, a citizen of the Navajo Nation, has experience working in President Trump’s first Administration as a Special Assistant to the President. We are optimistic that, if confirmed, he will carry out with enthusiasm and effectiveness the federal government’s treaty, trust, and statutory responsibilities on behalf of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian people and our nations.

As you know, President Trump has moved quickly on a number of national initiatives that have had an impact on the federal funding and services provided to Tribal governments and Native people. We urge you to move quickly to conduct Mr. Kirkland’s confirmation hearing and to report him favorably to the full Senate. The opportunities and challenges presented by the new Administration are best addressed if the President has his team in place as soon as possible, and that includes Mr. Kirkland.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this recommendation with you.

Sincerely,

HON. ESTAVIO ELIZONDO, SR., CHAIRMAN

TOLOWA DEE-NI’ NATION
March 20, 2025

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Schatz:

On behalf of the Tolowa Dee-ni’ Nation, we are writing to express our support of the nomination of William “Billy” Kirkland as the Assistant Secretary of Interior for Indian Affairs. We are pleased by his nomination and believe his experience will be valuable in this crucial role.

The Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs is charged with ensuring that the United States upholds its trust and treaty responsibilities to Tribal nations. That includes fostering Tribal economic development within a Tribe’s aboriginal and reservation homelands, and protecting against territorial or other encroachments that interfere with a Tribe’s efforts towards self-reliance.

Mr. Kirkland, a citizen of the Navajo Nation, has previously served as Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs from 2017 to 2021. In this role, he served as a direct point of contact for tribal governments and was instrumental in giving tribal leaders a voice on critical issues.

We are optimistic that, if confirmed, he will carry out with enthusiasm and effectiveness the federal government's treaty, trust, and statutory responsibilities on behalf of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian people and our nations.

The Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation looks forward to the opportunity to work collaboratively with Mr. Kirkland upon his confirmation to protect our tribal sovereignty and advance the goals of our Citizens. We believe his commitment to engaging with Indian Country will be beneficial for all tribal nations.

Thank you for your consideration of our support for William "Billy" Kirkland III.

Sincerely,

HON. JERI LYNN THOMPSON, CHAIRPERSON

SANTA ROSA RANCHERIA TACHI YOKUT TRIBE

March 20, 2025

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Schatz:

On behalf of the Santa Rosa Rancheria Tachi Yokut Tribe ("Tribe"), I write to express our strong support for the nomination of William "Billy" Kirkland III, a citizen of the Navajo Nation, as the next Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. Mr. Kirkland's deep understanding of tribal governments, extensive leadership experience, and commitment to upholding tribal sovereignty make him an ideal candidate for this position.

The Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs plays a vital role in advising the Secretary of the Interior and fulfilling the federal government's trust obligations to tribal nations. It is imperative that the Assistant Secretary be someone who not only understands the unique positions of tribal governments but also possesses in-depth knowledge of the Department of the Interior and the federal government's responsibilities to Indian Country.

Throughout his career, Mr. Kirkland has demonstrated a strong commitment to Indian Country. As a citizen of the Navajo Nation, former Special Assistant to the President, and Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Mr. Kirkland brings both personal experience and professional expertise that will be essential to supporting tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

The Tribe looks forward to engaging with Mr. Kirkland upon his confirmation to protect and strengthen our government-to-government relationship and advance policies that support tribal nations. We remain committed to partnering with the Department of the Interior to uphold tribal sovereignty and address critical issues facing our communities.

We respectfully urge you to swiftly confirm Mr. Kirkland so that he may begin the important work of serving tribes. We appreciate your attention to this matter and your continued support of tribal nations.

Respectfully,

HON. LEO SISCO, CHAIRMAN

OTOE-MISSOURIA TRIBE OF INDIANS

March 17, 2025

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Schatz:

On behalf of the Otoe-Missouria Tribe of Indians ("Tribe"), I write to express our strong support for the nomination of William "Billy" Kirkland III, a citizen of the Navajo Nation, as the next Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. Mr. Kirkland's deep understanding of tribal governments, extensive leadership experience, and commitment to upholding tribal sovereignty make him an ideal candidate for this position.

The Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs plays a vital role in advising the Secretary of the Interior and fulfilling the federal government's trust obligations to tribal nations. It is imperative that the Assistant Secretary be someone who not only understands the unique positions of tribal governments but also possesses in-depth knowledge of the Department of the Interior and the federal government's responsibilities to Indian Country.

Throughout his career, Mr. Kirkland has demonstrated a strong commitment to Indian Country. As a citizen of the Navajo Nation, former Special Assistant to the President, and Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Mr. Kirkland brings both personal experience and professional expertise that will be essential to supporting tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

The Tribe looks forward to engaging with Mr. Kirkland upon his confirmation to protect and strengthen our government-to-government relationship and advance policies that support tribal nations. We remain committed to partnering with the Department of the Interior to uphold tribal sovereignty and address critical issues facing our communities.

We respectfully urge you to swiftly confirm Mr. Kirkland so that he may begin the important work of serving tribes. We appreciate your attention to this matter and your continued support of tribal nations.

Respectfully,

HON. JOHN SHOTTON, CHAIRMAN

BIG VALLEY BAND OF POMO INDIANS
March 17, 2025

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Schatz:

On behalf of the Big Valley Band of Pomo Indians ("Tribe"), I write to express our strong support for the nomination of William "Billy" Kirkland III, a citizen of the Navajo Nation, as the next Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. Mr. Kirkland's deep understanding of tribal governments, extensive leadership experience, and commitment to upholding tribal sovereignty make him an ideal candidate for this position.

The Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs plays a vital role in advising the Secretary of the Interior and fulfilling the federal government's trust obligations to tribal nations. It is imperative that the Assistant Secretary be someone who not only understands the unique positions of tribal governments but also possesses in-depth knowledge of the Department of the Interior and the federal government's responsibilities to Indian Country.

Throughout his career, Mr. Kirkland has demonstrated a strong commitment to Indian Country. As a citizen of the Navajo Nation, former Special Assistant to the President, and Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Mr. Kirkland brings both personal experience and professional expertise that will be essential to supporting tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

The Tribe looks forward to engaging with Mr. Kirkland upon his confirmation to protect and strengthen our government-to-government relationship and advance policies that support tribal nations. We remain committed to partnering with the Department of the Interior to uphold tribal sovereignty and address critical issues facing our communities.

We respectfully urge you to swiftly confirm Mr. Kirkland so that he may begin the important work of serving tribes. We appreciate your attention to this matter and your continued support of tribal nations.

Respectfully,

HON. FLAMAN MCCLOUD JR., CHAIRMAN

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. MIKE ROUNDS TO
 WILLIAM "BILLY" KIRKLAND

Question 1. Mr. Kirkland, in your testimony you mentioned that you wanted to engage with this committee as well as other tribal stakeholders on issues impacting Indian Country, if confirmed, as part of your listening tour will you commit to visiting South Dakota?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to visiting with you and engaging with Tribes in South Dakota.

Question 2. Mr. Kirkland, under the Biden administration, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) maintained that the agency would need \$1.7 billion to fully staff tribal law enforcement agencies. Whether or not this figure is accurate, it is clear there are real funding challenges.

In FY24 Congress appropriated \$553 million to the BIA for Public Safety and Justice operations. But from this, South Dakota tribes received \$19.5 million for criminal investigations and police services. To put this in perspective, under the current continuing resolution, for every dollar appropriated to the BIA for Public Safety and Justice operations, South Dakota tribes receive 3.53 pennies. At the same time, a disproportionate percentage of crime is committed in the Great Plains Region and according to the FBI, South Dakota tribes face some of the highest crime rates in the nation.

This stems from an outdated and antiquated funding formula used by BIA, one that fails to take into account the serious public safety threats faced by our tribes

in South Dakota. Mr. Kirkland, can I have your commitment to review how BIA allocates Public Safety funds to make sure we are supporting tribes with the greatest need?

Answer. I recognize the challenges involved in policing within Indian Country and am committed to ensuring high-quality services so that we maintain safe Indian Country communities. As I am not at the Department, I am not familiar with the allocation formulas for Public Safety and Justice operations. But if confirmed, I commit to learning more about this issue and to work with the committee on ensuring that funds are efficiently and effectively allocated.

Question 3. Mr. Kirkland, compounding these issues is the requirement that nearly all prospective tribal officers, including direct service and 638 officers, are required to receive training at the Indian Police Academy (IPA) in Artesia, New Mexico. In recent conversations with tribal police chiefs, it has become apparent the requirement to send prospective officers to the IPA has hampered recruitment efforts on the Great Plains. Are you willing to consider the creation of an additional facility in the Great Plains?

Answer. If confirmed, I will get up to speed on this and look forward to working with you on finding ways to address public safety in Indian Country.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. BRIAN SCHATZ TO
WILLIAM "BILLY" KIRKLAND

Question 1. You noted that you have provided campaign and strategic consulting services for several state and national clients. At any point during your time as a consultant in private practice, did you handle any matter(s) related to Tribes? If yes, please describe.

Answer. As I noted at my hearing, my prior experience in the White House, in business, and in government relations has given me the unique tools to serve all Indian Country, Alaska Natives, ANCs and Native Hawaiians. I am honored to be nominated for this position, and if confirmed, I will use my experience both inside and out of government to deliver for Indian Country.

Question 2. At any point during your service at the White House as Deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs and Special Assistant to the President, did you handle any matter(s) related to Tribes? If yes, please describe.

Answer. During my time in the White House, I was proud to work closely with the Department of the Interior and the Office of Indian Affairs on a range of issues. Our administration was the first to formally recognize the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. President Trump issued an Executive Order establishing Operation Lady Justice and later issued a proclamation on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives and signed Savanna's Act and the Not Invisible Act. I was privileged to be part of the first administration to recognize and honor Native Code Talkers in the Oval Office.

Question 3. You noted that your experience at the White House involved coordinating with 50 state governors, 7,386 state legislators, 33,144 counties, and roughly 19,000 county commissioners and board members. How many of the 574 federally-recognized Tribal governments did you directly interface with in your roles at the White House?

Answer. Engaging with Indian Country is not a game of numbers. During my time in the White House, I was proud to work closely with the Department of the Interior and the Office of Indian Affairs on a range of issues. Our administration was the first to formally recognize the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. President Trump issued an executive order establishing Operation Lady Justice and later issued a proclamation on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives and signed into law Savanna's Act and the Not Invisible Act. I am proud of the accomplishments of the first Trump Administration and if confirmed, I look forward to working with tribes to build upon those accomplishments.

Question 4. If confirmed, will you ensure all the bureaus and offices under your management are transparent and responsive to Congress in its oversight capacity by—

- a. Timely and fully responding to all Committee inquiries and letters?
- b. Complying with Committee deadlines for submitting testimony?
- c. Providing technical assistance and briefings in a timely manner when requested?

Answer. I believe in transparency and responsiveness, and if confirmed, I look forward to responding to the Committee's requests as appropriate in a timely manner in accordance with law.

Question 5. In your responses to the Committee questionnaire, you mention the importance of setting goals for the organization, which will focus on leading to "more economic opportunities through increased access to capital and better broadband connectivity." You also mention major goals as "better and more innovative education opportunities," and major operational objectives as a "more streamlined approach to oil, gas, and mineral exploration throughout Indian Country," working to "improve the process and speed in which various approvals happen," and "how the land into trust process is managed."

- a. What are your specific policy goals for increased access to capital at the BIA and other federal education programs serving Native communities?
- b. What are your specific policy goals for better broadband connectivity at the BIA and other federal education programs serving Native communities?
- c. What are your specific policy goals for more innovative education opportunities at the BIE and other federal education programs serving Native communities?
- d. What are your specific policy goals for a more streamlined approach to oil, gas, and mineral exploration throughout Indian Country?
- e. Will your specific policy goals to streamline energy exploration in Indian Country include renewable technologies if Tribes request or want those processes streamlined as well?
- f. What are your specific policy goals to improve the process and speed in which various approvals happen? What does "various approvals" include?
- g. What are your specific policy goals to improve how the land into trust process is managed?

Answer. My specific goals are to improve economic opportunities, education, law enforcement and infrastructure in Indian Country as we improve the trust relationship with tribal nations. As I stated at my hearing, if confirmed, I intend to spend my first 90 days listening to tribal leaders and the Congressional Committees of jurisdiction to understand top priorities and will work closely with the political and career employees at the Department to develop a clear action plan. I will work to build consensus and then move quickly once met.

Question 6. What is your current employment during your nomination and pending confirmation? Please list all employers.

Answer. My current employment is set forth in my ethics paperwork and supplemental 5-day letter previously provided to this committee.

Question 7. What will the nature of your relationship be with your PWK Group clients listed as current on your questionnaire, if confirmed? Please include in your description individual explanations for each of your current clients, including Lt. Governor Burt Jones and U.S. Representative Brian Jack.

Answer. I have worked with the Department's career ethics officials as part of my nomination process and my ethics agreement that has previously been provided to this Committee sets out the nature of my relationship with my employer, the PWK Group, if I am confirmed. And, if I am confirmed, I will continue to seek the advice of the Department's career ethics officials on ethics issues.

Question 8. In your ethics paperwork, you reserve the right to seek conflict-of-interest and personal financial interest waivers under current law. 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502 and Title 18 Section 208. Will you pledge not to request or accept any ethics waivers?

Answer. I do not anticipate seeking a waiver as I am not aware of any ethical conflicts. As previously stated, if confirmed, I will seek the advice of the Department's career ethics officials and comply with all ethics laws.

Question 9. As you committed in your nomination hearing, please provide the Committee with a copy of the purchase agreement of the sale of your consulting firm, PWK Group, LLC.

Answer. As part of my nomination process, I have worked with the Department's career ethics officials to provide this committee with my financial disclosures and ethics agreement. As I stated at my hearing, I pledge to continue to seek their advice to ensure compliance with Federal ethics laws if confirmed for this position.

Question 10. When asked at your nomination hearing if you would abide by a federal law that prohibits unequal treatment of federally-recognized Tribes, including based on when or how they were federally-recognized, you replied "all federally rec-

ognized Tribes have a treaty obligation that the U.S. government has to respect and follow the law in terms of how those obligations have been recorded.”

- a. Are you aware that not all federally-recognized Tribes have treaties with the U.S.?
- b. Please clarify your statement with respect to all federally-recognized Tribes enumerated pursuant to the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994.
- c. Will you commit to abiding by 25 U.S.C. 5123(f) and other federal law, including caselaw, by ensuring all federally-recognized Tribes are entitled to the same privileges and immunities as one another, regardless of—
 - i. how they were recognized;
 - ii. whether or not they have a treaty;
 - iii. which political party they support;
 - iv. how the state they live in voted in previous elections; or
 - v. whether you interfaced with them in your former role at the White House?

Answer. There are over 500 federally recognized tribes, all with different identities, histories and needs, with whom the Department has a government-to-government relationship. Although I am not a legal scholar, I recognize that there is a complex historical and legal framework binding the United States to federally recognized tribes. As I stated at my hearing, if confirmed, I will always follow the law and will seek the counsel of the Department's attorneys to do so.

Question 11. Do you support federal efforts to expand access to the ballot box for Native communities, and their ability to cast ballots by mail given the persistent lack of polling and registration opportunities on Tribal lands and remote villages?

Answer. I believe tribal citizens should have access to exercise their fundamental right to vote. If confirmed as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, my role will be to oversee the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Indian Education and Bureau of Trust Funds Administration. As the liaison between tribal nations and the federal government, I will work with this committee to ensure the federal government upholds its unique trust responsibilities to federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and individuals including on tribal sovereignty, self-determination and economic development. My decisionmaking will be informed by meaningful consultation with tribal governments, leaders, Alaska Natives and ANCs, and engagement with communities and stakeholders.

Question 12. You state in your responses to the Committee questionnaire that “education is the key to economic mobility and overhauling the bureaus and offices within Indian Affairs is a must to meet that goal.” What efforts for agency reorganization will you put in place “to meet that goal”?

Answer. President Trump is focused on ensuring that we have an efficient and effective workforce. If confirmed, I look forward to taking a hard look at the Indian Affairs workforce to ensure that we are able to fulfill our mission while supporting the President and Secretary's priorities.

Question 13. Do you plan to involve DOGE in decision-making at Interior?

Answer. If confirmed as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, I will have decisionmaking authority for issues related to Indian Country in accordance with the policies of the Secretary and the President.

Question 14. You state in your responses to Committee questionnaire that, “if a government program is no longer needed. . . a final decision can be made on the termination after thoughtful consultation [with Tribes].”

- a. Will you commit to holding meaningful Tribal consultation prior to terminating, defunding, or cutting programs at Interior, or demanding other agencies do the same before terminating programs that have a Tribal or Native Hawaiian nexus?
- b. What processes and procedures do you consider to be included in “meaningful consultation”?
- c. How does the federal trust responsibility impact a program termination decision?
- d. Will the consultation with Tribes be aligned with the Trump Administration priorities?

And, or, with Indian Country's needs?

Answer. Consultation is a foundational aspect of our Nation-to-Nation relationship with tribes, and if confirmed, I will make sure that we welcome tribes to the federal decisionmaking table and ensure federal officials with decision-making au-

thority, like me, are active participants. I believe meaningful consultation includes the principles of participation, listening, understanding, and subsequently ensuring that substantial consideration is given to feedback from tribes, with the end goal being to carefully consider and balance interests and strive for consensus wherever and whenever possible.

Question 15. What are the roles of the private sector and states in executing the federal trust responsibility?

Answer. The federal government has the primary obligation to execute the federal trust responsibility. States have limited direct roles and jurisdiction in Indian Country, but there are certain federal statutes that allow some limited state intervention. Similarly, the private sector does not have a direct role but can be a partner in assisting the Federal government in fulfilling its trust responsibility by supporting partnerships that promote economic development. These private sector investments can help sustain tribes economically and promote tribal self-determination.

Question 16. Part of the role of Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs is to be a liaison and an advocate for Tribes, both within Interior and in other agencies of the executive branch. Traditionally, the Assistant Secretary also coordinates with leadership within Interior on advancing federal Native Hawaiian relations. As reorganization efforts, budget cuts, and layoffs affect Native programs across the federal government, what will you do to advocate for Native communities to protect crucial programs that are part of the trust responsibility in other agencies?

Answer. Building and maintaining strong relationships with native communities and ensuring they have the vital public safety, social and infrastructure services that the Department is charged with providing through our trust responsibilities will be a top priority of mine, if confirmed. As I stated at my hearing, I believe there are number of protocols and processes we need to look at closely and that there is room for improvement. I commit to working collaboratively to ensure resources and services are provided in an effective and efficient manner.

Question 17. In its budget request, the DOJ proposes to move the Office of Tribal Justice (OTJ) under the Office of Justice Programs, the primary function of which is grantmaking. The Tribal Law and Order Act requires the OTJ to be a component, not a sub-component, of the Department of Justice. Do you agree with subordinating OTJ, which BIA law enforcement partners with, within the DOJ?

Answer. As I am not a part of the Administration, I am not familiar with the budget request for the Department of Justice.

Question 18. List every entity that paid you or PWK Group, LLC more than \$5,000 since January 2020 and identify all DOI matters from which you will recuse yourself from if confirmed.

Answer. I have worked with the Department's career ethics officials as part of my nomination process and to provide this committee with my financial disclosures and ethics agreement. I will continue to seek their advice to ensure compliance with Federal ethics laws, including recusals, if confirmed for this position.

Question 19. Detail how continued ownership of Amazon, Apple, and Microsoft stock complies with 18 U.S.C. § 208, and enumerate the Indian Affairs issues you will recuse yourself from.

Answer. I have worked with the Department's career ethics officials as part of my nomination process and to provide this committee with my financial disclosures and ethics agreement. I will continue to seek their advice to ensure compliance with Federal ethics laws, including recusals, if confirmed for this position.

Question 20. Your ethics agreement acknowledges the 30 U.S.C. § 1211(f) ban on coalholdings. List every energy-sector asset you and your immediate family currently hold and the divestiture timeline for each.

Answer. I have worked with the Department's career ethics officials as part of my nomination process and to provide this committee with my financial disclosures and ethics agreement. I will continue to seek their advice to ensure compliance with Federal ethics laws, including recusals, if confirmed for this position.

Question 21. Describe how prior consulting for BGR Group, Pace-O-Matic, and other current clients will not compromise your impartiality on Indian gaming issues and National Indian Gaming Commission decisions.

Answer. I hold myself to the highest ethical standards. I have worked with the Department's career ethics officials as part of my nomination process and to provide this committee with my financial disclosures and ethics agreement. I will continue to seek their advice to ensure compliance with Federal ethics laws, including recusals, if confirmed for this position.

Question 22. If requested by the President, OMB, or the Secretary, will you identify and suggest funding for rescissions in BIA, BIE, and BTFA?

- a. If so, will you consult with Indian Tribes prior to making such recommendations?
- b. Do you believe you have an obligation to inform this Committee or the Appropriations Committee of such recommendations?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Secretary and the Administration to identify ways we can work with our tribal and state and local partners to honor our trust responsibilities and improve effective delivery of vital services. Broadly, I intend to promote education reform and economic and resource development on tribal lands but ultimately believe that priorities need to be made through meaningful consultation with Native communities, tribes and Congress. As I stated at my hearing, I intend to spend my first 90 days listening to tribal leaders and the Congressional committees of jurisdiction to understand top priorities, build consensus and develop a clear action plan.

Question 23. Produce all contracts, scope-of-work documents, and lobbying activities executed for Wayne Halfway House or its FOCUS PAC and explain how you will avoid any appearance of a conflict in overseeing DOI juvenile justice grants.

Answer. I have worked with the Department's career ethics officials as part of my nomination process and to provide this committee with my financial disclosures and ethics agreement. I will continue to seek their advice to ensure compliance with federal ethics laws, including recusals, if confirmed for this position.

Question 24. Explain, in detail, how you will remain below the \$35,000 annual outside-income cap for PAS officials.

Answer. I have worked with the Department's career ethics officials as part of my nomination process and to provide this committee with my financial disclosures and ethics agreement. I will continue to seek their advice to ensure compliance with federal ethics laws, including recusals, if confirmed for this position.

Question 25. You have run political PACs and corporate accounts that move seven-figure sums. Please explain how you will ensure Interior's Indian-Affairs appropriations are obligated strictly for their statutory purpose and not parked, repurposed, or withheld in violation of the Anti-Deficiency Act.

Answer. I am not at the Department and not aware of the specific concerns you have. As I stated at my hearing, if I am confirmed, I will follow the law to ensure that funding provided by Congress is prioritized to best meet our mission and the President's priorities.

Question 26. Describe the standard operating procedure you will issue to guarantee Government Accountability Office examiners have necessary, real-time access to Indian Affairs data, personnel, and correspondence.

Answer. As I stated at my hearing, transparency is of the utmost importance. I believe the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs should be readily accessible to all stakeholders. If confirmed, I look forward to being briefed on the procedures for responding to inquiries from the Government Accountability Office.

Question 27. The Government Accountability Office recently reported that Indian Affairs' chronic vacancy rates and skills gaps are undermining program delivery. If confirmed, what hard targets will you set for filling mission-critical roles at BIA, BIE, and BTFA, and will you commit to updating this Committee in a timely matter about workforce-related issues at these bureaus?

Answer. I am not at the Department and not aware of the details of the issue you have raised, but if I am confirmed I look forward to being briefed on this issue and continuing the dialogue with you and your colleagues to ensure bureaus under my purview deliver mission critical outcomes for Indian Country to meet our trust responsibilities in a manner that is responsive, respectful and rooted in partnership.

Question 28. The President's budget request for fiscal year 2026 cuts key BIA and BIE programs while simultaneously cutting funds for BIA and BIE from other agencies, such as the Department of Justice and Department of Education. Will you commit, if confirmed, to coordinate with other agencies to ensure future funding decisions are not made in isolation?

Answer. As I am not currently in the Department, I cannot speak to the specific process of creating the budget, and I have no knowledge to assert the current budget was drafted in isolation. However, I intend to work collaboratively with all stakeholders within and outside the government to best serve Indian Country.

Question 29. Do you stand by your clients' actions—namely Donald Trump, Kelly Loeffler, Burt Jones, and David Perdue—in Georgia to decertify a free and fair election?

Answer. I support the President, and if confirmed, look forward to advancing this Administration's priorities to bring meaningful opportunities to Indian Country, up-

hold meaningful government-to-government relationships with federally recognized tribes, Alaska Natives and ANCs. This includes enacting policies that support self-determination and tribal sovereignty, and stewarding trust assets while maintaining the federal trust responsibilities that aim to support the social, cultural and economic self-sufficiency of tribal communities.

Question 30. Have you been interviewed or subpoenaed by any legal bodies or investigative committees related to the 2020 election?

Answer. No.

Question 31. Did you ever coordinate messaging or strategy with attorneys like Kenneth Chesebro, Ray Smith, John Eastman, Rudy Giuliani, or any of the other 19 people indicted around the attempts to change Georgia's election results?

Answer. I do not recall any conversations with Kenneth Chesebro, Ray Smith, John Eastman, or Rudy Giuliani regarding Georgia's 2020 election results. In my role as a consultant to the 2020 Presidential Campaign I interacted with many campaign staff and volunteers but always followed the laws and regulations as to campaigns and elections. As stated before, I was never asked to be interviewed or subpoenaed by any legal bodies or investigative committees related to the 2020 election.

Question 32. Did you retain private counsel due to the investigations into election fraud in Georgia?

Answer. No.

Question 33. Do you accept the outcome of the 2020 election, particularly in Georgia?

Answer. I accept that Joe Biden was sworn into office as the 46th President of the United States.

Question 34. Have you ever supported or participated in efforts to cast doubt on the legitimacy of U.S. election results?

Answer. I have always followed all campaign and election laws.

Question 35. Were any of your clients involved in setting up the call with President Trump and Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger in which President Trump asked the Secretary of State to find him over 11,000 votes so he would win Georgia?

Answer. As stated in my testimony I have no first-hand knowledge of that call, and I was not involved in setting it up.

Question 36. What was your involvement in liaising between the Georgia Secretary of State's office and the President and/or his campaign in 2020?

Answer. I was a Senior Advisor to the Presidential Campaign as it related to Georgia political strategy and, therefore, I had conversations with relevant stakeholders and elected officials in Georgia in the run up to the 2020 election. I interacted with the Secretary of State's office as I did with other elected officials in Georgia.

Question 37. In October 2022, you appeared on the GOPAC Podcast titled, "Political Operative and White House Alum, Billy Kirkland." The recording is no longer publicly available. Please provide a recording or written transcript of this episode.

Answer. I do not have access to a recording or written transcript of this episode.

Question 38. In your questionnaire, you list Connect South and Potomac South under your Business Relationships (Question A11).

a. The questionnaire requires you to disclose all positions held, but you did not list your positions with either of these entities. Please list your titles at Connect South and Potomac South and indicate whether these are former or current positions.

b. If confirmed, will you or any of your family members continue any business relationships or retain financial interests with Potomac South after the sale of PWK Group, LLC?

Answer. If confirmed, I will abide by the terms of my ethics agreement previously provided to this committee.

Question 39. Confirm if each the following contributions were made by you, which were reported by the Federal Elections Commissions data and other State Campaign Finance Systems, but were not reported on your ethics or questionnaire paperwork.

- 2/19/2020 Johnson for Georgians, Inc.: \$500
- 8/5/2012 Committee to Elect BJ Mathis Chairman: \$500 in-kind contribution
- 8/18/2012 Committee to Elect BJ Mathis Chairman: \$500
- 2/20/2020 Trump Victory: \$3,000

- 3/11/2020 Donald J. Trump for President, Inc.: \$1,150
- 3/11/2020 Trump Victory: \$1,150
- 5/12/2020 Trump Victory: \$1,000
- 8/9/2021 Burt Jones for Georgia: \$1,000
- 12/21/2021 Burt Jones for Georgia: \$2,588
- 1/9/2022 Burt Jones for Georgia: \$1,291.32
- 2/28/2022 Georgia Republican Party, Inc.: \$1,000
- 8/29/2023 Georgia Republican Party, Inc.: \$5,000
- 1/2/2024 Georgia Republican Party, Inc.: \$1,000
- 9/10/2024 Trump 47 Committee, Inc.: \$5,000
- 8/28/2023 Brandon Beach: \$1,000
- 5/10/2022 David Clark: \$479.70
- 3/9/2022 Timothy Fleming: \$500

Answer. As a political consultant, I have worked with and contributed to a number of political campaigns, as I shared on my committee questionnaire. In addition to 19 contributions identified within the 10-year timeframe and \$500 threshold on my questionnaire, including to Tim Fleming and Brandon Beach, I can confirm that either my company or I made the contributions you listed except for the contribution to Johnson for Georgians, which was not made in 2020 (it was made in 2010), and the contribution to Trump 47 Committee, Inc. I note that some of the contributions you listed were made outside the questionnaire's 10-year and \$500 threshold.

Question 40. In your responses to Committee questionnaire, you state that you worked on a number of political campaigns, "as identified in this questionnaire, and to the Georgia Republican Party, Inc., the Republican National Committee, Never Surrender, Inc. (Formally Donald J. Trump for President 2024, Inc.)." Your questionnaire answer lists your work for seven political campaigns but omits several others. Please confirm if you worked for each of the following political campaigns and specify your role, which were reported by the Federal Elections Commissions data and other State Campaign Finance Systems (but were not listed in your questionnaire paperwork):

- Donald J. Trump for President, Inc. (2020, 2016)
- Georgians for Kelly Loeffler
- Perdue for Senate
- Marcio Rubio for Senate
- Kasich for America Inc.
- Faith & Freedom Coalition
- Virginia House Republican Caucus
- Georgia Republican Party Inc.
- One Georgia PAC
- Great America Committee
- Keep America Great Again Action Fund
- Georgia Values Action
- Washington Deserves Better PAC
- Pruitt for House
- Brian Preston for Commission
- Dr. Karen Mathiak for State House
- The Committee to Elect Matt Ramsey

Answer. Again, as a political consultant, I have provided a range of services to a number of political parties or election committees and confirm that I worked with each of these campaigns. In some instances, such as with One Georgia PAC and the Great America Committee, I had no official role but recall receiving a travel reimbursement. For others, my role was as limited as a three-week to a two-month project, such as for the Keep America Great Again Action Fund, the Georgia Values Action, or Kasich for America. Other such limited roles included helping organize one fundraising event, such as for Marco Rubio for Senator, or for helping build a website, such as for Dr. Karen Mathiak for State House. I was a consultant for Donald J. Trump for President, Inc., Georgians for Kelly Loeffler, and Washington Deserves Better PAC. I note that five of these political campaigns occurred outside of the committee questionnaire's 10-year timeframe, and others, including Perdue for

Senate and the Georgia Republican Party, were provided on my committee questionnaire.

Question 41. Your response to question 4 in Section C—Potential Conflicts of Interest in the Committee questionnaire noted your previous efforts in the White House to advocate for legislation that supported the administration’s priorities.

a. Please clarify if, during the past 10 years, you have been engaged for the purpose of directly or indirectly influencing any legislation and the execution of law or public policy at the state level.

b. Please clarify if any of your consulting or private work over the past 10 years has involved directly or indirectly influencing the passage, defeat, or modification of any legislation or execution of law or public policy, either at the state or federal level. If so, please describe the nature of the services you provided for each client and identify the legislation or policy implicated.

Answer. As a political consultant, I have been engaged as a consultant with political parties and political campaigns, all of which are generally interested in influencing laws and public policy at the state or federal level. As I stated in my committee questionnaire, I have consulted with the Office of Government Ethics and the Department of the Interior’s Designated Agency Ethics Official to identify any potential conflicts of interest or appearances of conflicts of interest. If confirmed, any potential conflicts will be resolved in accordance with the terms of my ethics agreement that has been provided to this Committee.

Question 42. Please provide your 2019 OGE termination report or other documentation to certify your last day of prior federal service.

Answer. Upon further review of my records, I can confirm my last day of federal service was October 15, 2019.

Question 43. You pledged in your 2017 ethics filing to make PWK Group “inactive,” yet campaign reports show you were paid while you were on the White House payroll between 2017 and 2019.

a. Did you clear this compensation with ethics while you were at the White House?

b. Please provide documentation that you made PWK Group officially inactive pursuant to your 2017 ethics pledge.

Answer. I hold myself to the highest ethical standards. I am not aware of any actions that have not been in accordance with federal law. I will work with the Department’s ethics career officials to ensure compliance with federal law if confirmed for this position.

Question 44. Please confirm your employment at the following entities, your position with these entities, and the years you worked there (missing from responses to Committee questionnaire):

- Parkside Management
- Five Points

Answer. I am not familiar with Parkside Management. In 2008, I served as a consultant for Five Points Consulting, as indicated in my response to question 11 on my committee questionnaire.

Question 45. On your questionnaire, you noted that you attended Eagle’s Landing High School from 1996–1996 and graduated from “College Preparatory” in May 1998.

a. Did you transfer to College Preparatory during your high school years, and if so, when?

b. Is College Preparatory the official name of the high school? Where is it located (city, state)?

Answer. I listed in my questionnaire that I attended Eagles Landing High School from 1996–1998 and graduated with a College Preparatory Diploma in May of 1998.

Question 46. Explain the “strategic partnerships” you arranged for Wayne Halfway House while it fought oversight legislation for its youth treatment centers in Tennessee and financed the FOCUS PAC.

a. Did your work include political activity or donor targeting?

b. What assurances does this committee have that you can impartially oversee BIA public safety and justice facilities with this record?

Answer. As I stated in my questionnaire, I have consulted with the Office of Government Ethics and the Department of the Interior's Designated Agency Ethics Official to identify any potential conflicts of interest or appearances of conflicts of interest. If confirmed, any potential conflicts will be resolved in accordance with the terms of my Ethics Agreements that has been provided to this committee.

Question 47. In your questionnaire response, you state that you will "aim to ensure that regulations issued by Indian Affairs comply with the spirit of the laws passed by Congress."

a. Please clarify what you mean that you will aim to follow the spirit of the law.

b. Will you commit to following the letter of the law as Congress wrote it?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to following the law to ensure the important work carried out by the bureaus under my purview as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs is carried out efficiently and effectively.

Questions and answers to 48–60 were redacted due to personal information not released to the public.

Question 61. At the nomination hearing, you testified that you would work with the attorneys at the Department of the Interior to ensure compliance with rules and laws of ethics. Please clarify, will you, personally, pledge not to seek or accept any ethics waivers?

Answer. As I stated at my hearing, I pledge to work with the Department's career ethics staff to make sure my actions as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs are in compliance with ethics laws if I am confirmed.

Question 62. At the nomination hearing, you stated that neither you nor your family will retain a financial stake in "the firm" following sale. Please clarify, will either you or any of your family members retain a financial stake in, or be employed by, Potomac South?

Answer. The details of future engagement with Potomac South LLC, if I am confirmed, are set out in my ethics agreement that has previously been provided to the committee.

Question 63. Will you cut ties with Potomac South, including decision-making powers or leadership roles, if confirmed?

Answer. If confirmed, I will abide by the terms of my ethics agreement previously provided to this committee.

Question 64: You stated it is important that the "Office of Indian Affairs" prioritize how funding provided by Congress is allocated.

a. Please clarify what you mean by "prioritize" funding provided by Congress.

b. If confirmed, will you follow the law directing how federal appropriations must be spent?

Answer. As I stated at my hearing, I believe it is important to prioritize funding provided by Congress. I believe government has a responsibility to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars to ensure those dollars are used effectively. If confirmed, I will follow the law to meet the needs of Indian Country.

Question 65. In response to my question on your role in the Georgia Secretary of State's call with President Trump, you testified that you did not speak to the press and that you were not on the call, or in the room for that call. However, please clarify if you have personal knowledge of the call before or after it occurred.

Answer. I am aware that the call you reference occurred.

Question 66. Do you believe the realignments of the Department of the Interior and other agencies uphold the trust responsibility and needs of Indian Country?

Answer. I am not at the Department and am not briefed on the realignments that you are referencing. If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring that the Department meets its federal trust responsibilities and addresses the needs of Indian Country.

Question 67. What was your specific role in advancing Operation Lady Justice during the first Trump Administration?

Answer. I was proud to be a part of the first Trump Administration, re-election campaign, and the 2024 campaign. During the lead up President Trump's issuance of the executive order establishing Operation Lady Justice, I worked with tribal leaders and the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs as they consulted with the Department of the Interior and other federal agencies and planned regional meetings and consultations. When the Executive Order was issued, I was no longer working at the White House, but because of my previous role, I was in contact with

multiple tribes, tribal leaders and tribal representatives, and remained in contact with the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Question 68. Are you currently employed by the Department of the Interior? If so, please provide your title, job description, and scope of your work in that role.

Answer. I am not currently employed by the Department of the Interior.

Question 69. You provided a list of clients you work with under PWK Group. None of these clients are Tribes. What is your experience working with Tribes outside of your experience at the White House?

Answer. I have worked and collaborated with a number of tribes on a variety of policy and cultural issues. Whether economic development issues, working to preserve traditional languages, further highlighting MMIW to different DMAs via pro sports teams or working to highlight Native athletes, I have been proud to do so without any monetary cost to tribes.

Question 70. In the President's Budget for FY 2026, a number of programs under the Bureau of Indian Affairs were terminated, reprogrammed, or otherwise modified. Will you support the continuation of such changes when you are the AS-IA during the FY 2027, FY 2028, and FY 2029 budget formulation process? If not, please share your thoughts about any changes you may want to reverse.

- a. What role will Tribal consultation play in your thinking or actions?
- b. What is your role to advocate for Indian Country in the budget formulation process?
- c. Several members of this Committee are also members of the Appropriations Committee, do you agree with Director Vought that the appropriations process needs to be less bipartisan? If so why?
- d. What is Director Vought's role in policy making for Indian Country related to your own role, if you are confirmed?
- e. Do you believe that funding is related to policy?
- f. Do you believe the programs under your authority as ASIA, if confirmed, should receive additional funding, support, or consideration? If not, why?
- g. What legal effect does the Presidents Budget Request have on the Department of the Interior's actions?
- h. What steps can be made between the submission of the President's Budget and the Congressionally passed Appropriations budget?

Answer. As I am not an employee of the Department, I am not familiar with the details of the President's budget proposal. I also cannot speak to Director Vought's views on the appropriations process. However, in terms of my decision-making if confirmed, as I demonstrated during the previous Trump Administration, collaboration and meaningful consultation with tribal leaders will be a top priority. I look forward to being briefed on the funding needs of the programs I would oversee as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs and to meeting the needs of Indian Country with the funds appropriated by Congress.

Question 71. You worked to establish Opportunity Zones in Indian Country. How does this work impact NAHASDA or the Housing Improvement Program under BIA?

- a. How have you advocated for Indian housing programs under HUD, BIA, and USDA?

Answer. I share Secretary's Burgum's focus on the pressing need to secure affordable housing across the country, including in tribal communities. As part of the Trump Administration, I was privileged to help encourage Opportunity Zones in Indian Country, which can support housing development to address this important issue.

Question 72. If confirmed, will you support programs supporting Native American language education?

- a. For students at the early childhood and preschool level?
- b. For students at the elementary level and secondary?
- c. For students in higher education?
- d. For adult learners?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support Native American language programs for learners of all ages. I've seen firsthand how important language is to identity and belonging, especially in Native communities. As I shared in my testimony, I never became fluent in my language and that's something I have carried with me. It's one

reason I strongly believe in maintaining or expanding access to Native language education.

Question 73. DOI and BIA has played a vital role in illuminating the federal Indian Boarding School policies and their impacts on Native communities, including intergenerational trauma and devastating impacts to Native American languages. Do you support efforts to address the legacy of the Indian Boarding School policies? If not, why not?

a. If confirmed, how will you continue to support previous Department efforts?

Answer. The Department has undertaken important work to document and better understand the history and impacts of federal Indian boarding school policies. If confirmed, I will continue to engage on these efforts and ensure alignment with broader Departmental priorities. I recognize the importance of maintaining open dialogue with tribal nations and stakeholders as this work continues.

Question 74. Do you think the Department of Education's English-first policies could be a foundation for eliminating federal support to Native American languages funded by the same department?

Answer. The preservation and revitalization of Native languages is important to many tribal communities. If confirmed, I will listen closely to tribal leaders and educators as well as work with my colleagues at the Department of Education to better understand how current policies impact Native language programs and where continued support is most needed.

Question 75. What role do you believe continuing federal support in the perpetuation of language in your own life with the Navajo Nation? Do you support increased federal support for Native language revitalization and preservation efforts?

Answer. As I stated above, I've seen firsthand how important language is to identity and belonging, especially in Native communities. And I shared in my testimony that I never became fluent in my language and that's something I've carried with me. It's one reason I strongly believe in maintaining or expanding access to Native language education. When people are given the chance to reconnect with their language, it builds confidence, strengthens community ties, and gives people a more profound sense of who they are. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting Native language programs.

Question 76. Does the federal government have a responsibility to reverse the impacts of Federal Indian Boarding School policies on Native American families, Native American languages, and Native American cultures?

Answer. I believe the federal government has a role in working respectfully with tribes to understand the continuing impact of the federal Indian boarding school policies on Native communities and support locally driven solutions. If confirmed, I will approach this work with humility and a commitment to supporting programs that reflect the priorities and voices of Native people.

Question 77. Do you believe that self-determination is best served to empower Native nations to prioritize the needs of their people? Even when those needs do not align with the Administration's priorities, such as developing renewable energy?

Answer. As I stated in my testimony, I understand that part of the mission of Indian Affairs is to enact policies that support self determination and tribal sovereignty. If confirmed, I will work to ensure this obligation is carried out on behalf of tribes. I believe tribal governments, leaders and ANCs are best positioned to identify and implement the solutions their communities need including economic and energy development.

Question 78. What do you think are the most important statutory laws that govern the U.S.—Tribal trust relationship?

Answer. As I have previously noted, I am not a legal scholar. However, I do not believe that there are "important" vs "non-important" federal laws, particularly as they relate to Indian Country and our federal trust responsibility. If I am confirmed, I will ensure that the Department implements its mission in accordance with all federal laws and treaties.

Question 79. What is your position on supporting self determination by means of 638 contract authorities?

a. Will you advocate for more programs to be eligible for 638 contracts, if you are confirmed?

b. What role will you play in educating officials from other departments about the value of 638 contracting authority, if you are confirmed?

c. Do you support the current levels of 638 contracts and compacts, as well as Contract Support Costs?

- i. Should current levels be increased, remain level, or reduced? If so, why?

Answer. I support tribal self determination, and 638 contracts reflect the government-to-government relationship between tribes and the federal government. If confirmed, I will learn more about the programs currently eligible for 638 contracts and will advocate within the Department and with other federal partners to advance tribal selfdetermination. I am not at the Department and am not familiar with the current levels of funding for 638 contracts. If confirmed, I will work with tribes, the Department and Congress to advance the Administration's priorities for Indian Country.

Question 80. As a member of the Navajo Nation, you made many visits to your home, what other Reservations or Tribal lands have you visited, as appointee in Trump's first term, as a Tribal member, as a business person, or as a political campaign manager?

Answer. It has been a privilege and an honor to visit and experience many reservations and tribal lands across the country other than my own. During my time in the White House, I was proud to engage and work closely with leaders of multiple tribes on a range of issues. I am proud of the accomplishments of the first Trump Administration and, I look forward to visiting more native communities and working with tribes to build upon those accomplishments, if confirmed.

Question 81. Do you believe the trust responsibility requires full funding of Indian Water Settlements enacted into law?

- a. What role do you think AS-IA should play in advocating for annual funding in future negotiations?
- b. What is understanding of your role as a member of the Department of the Interior's Working Group on Indian Water Rights Settlement, if confirmed?

Answer. While I am not at the Department, I understand that the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs is a member of the Working Group that makes recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior on Indian water rights settlements and settlement policy. If confirmed, I would look forward to being briefed on this important subject and to working with my colleagues in the Department and the Administration to determine appropriate funding levels.

Question 82. What will your role be in interacting with Indian Water Rights Settlement parties and stakeholders?

- a. Do you believe the federal trust responsibility requires you to support additional water settlements and advocate for funding already enacted settlements?

Answer. I understand that negotiated Indian water settlements can resolve lengthy, contentious litigation among tribes and surrounding communities, provide certainty to water users and support tribal sovereignty and self-determination. If confirmed, I would work to ensure federal responsibilities provided in enacted water rights settlements are met so that tribes have access to clean, reliable water supplies.

Question 83. Do you believe that Tribes have the right to co-manage public lands?

Answer. While I have not been briefed on the legal framework governing public lands management, as I stated at my hearing, I believe collaboration and meaningful consultation with tribal leaders must be a top priority in fulfilling the mission of the office for which I have been nominated. If confirmed, my decisionmaking would be rooted in this principle. Question 84: Please explain your understanding of Tribal co-management authorities and Tribes' ability to establish land management, conservation, and development rules on their lands. Response: I am not at the Department and have not been briefed on the authorities you reference. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more including tribal and stakeholder perspectives and continuing this dialogue.

Question 85. Do you believe that traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) is science-based, or supported by science?

- a. Native communities have land stewardship frameworks that have sustained them for millennia. Do you believe that knowledge acquired through observation of the same land for thousands of years should be impacted by a partisan or political ideology with regard to federal lands, with regard to climate change, conservation, other land management practices?

Answer. I know and respect that Native communities have observed, interacted and stewarded the areas in which they live since time immemorial and have passed their knowledge down through generations.

Question 86. What is your view with regard to current land into trust Part 151 regulations? a. How do these regulations relate to your questionnaire response stating that the land into trust process should be streamlined?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to being briefed on the law and existing policies governing land into trust to identify ways to improve the efficiency of this process to benefit tribes' economic and social development goals.

Question 87. What are your views on taking land into trust as means of rebuilding Tribal homelands?

a. What is the ASIA's responsibility as a fiduciary to lands taken into trust and those resources?

Answer. I understand taking land into trust for the benefit of tribal governments and individual Indians is a process that helps restore tribal homelands, strengthen tribal sovereignty, and promote economic opportunities for tribal communities. If confirmed, I will listen to tribal leaders to better understand their views on this important matter.

Question 88. Given your support and the work you testified to raise awareness of Navajo Code Talkers, are you aware that under the Trump Administration, the Department of Defense removed information about the role Navajo Code Talkers played in the history of our country?

a. What would you do as AS-IA to voice your concerns for the Navajo Nation and other Tribes that may face the same treatment or historic erasure?

b. Do you believe such records should remain publicly accessible as a matter of policy?

c. Do you believe such information plays an educational role that is in the public good?

d. Do you believe such information honors the disproportionate rates of military service of Native Americans in active duty now or in prior U.S. conflict?

Answer. I cannot speak to the actions of the Department of Defense, but I know this Administration recognizes Navajo Native Talkers as heroes for their dedicated service, as do I.

Question 89. At your nomination hearing, Senator Cortez Masto mentioned that the Not Invisible Act Commission report was taken down from the DOJ website, a report of concern to DOI and BIA. In response, you committed to maintaining transparency if confirmed. As AS-IA how will you work to prevent actions like this in the future to maintain transparency? Answer. If confirmed as Assistant Secretary, as I stated at my hearing, I will look forward to working with this Committee, and to working in partnership with tribes, tribal leaders, and Alaska Native Corporations, to respond directly to concerns raised and to provide feedback and accountability. This will help build trust and ensure more effective delivery of services and programs.

Question 90. Your responsibilities as AS-IA, if confirmed, would be to work with and for 574 federally recognized Tribes. Do you believe it will be your role as AS-IA to have a greater or lesser responsibility to Tribal governments, based on membership levels, based on land holdings, based on treaties, or other federally defined metrics?

Answer. As I have stated, I recognize that Indian Country is not a homogeneous community—each tribe is distinct with its own identity, history and needs. If confirmed, my goal will be to honor the diversity of Indian Country by ensuring our policies are responsive, respectful, and rooted in partnership and meet our federal trust responsibilities.

Question 91. If confirmed, how will you work with the National Park Service to ensure federally funded institutions and all federal agencies comply with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work within the Department and with tribes to ensure that tribes may reclaim their ancestral remains and sacred objects as provided by law, including the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

Question 92. If confirmed, will you advocate for increased funding for Tribal Historic Preservation Officers?

Answer. I support the preservation of tribal history, traditions and sacred sites, and if confirmed look forward to working with tribes and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers to ensure that they have the resources needed to do so.

Question 93. If confirmed, will you commit to working with Secretary Burgum to clarify that his recent letter stating solar and wind energy projects must receive his personal sign-off does not apply to projects on Tribal lands?

Answer. I am not familiar with the letter that you are referring to, but certainly commit, if I am confirmed, to working with Secretary Burgum and with tribes on energy projects to implement the President's energy agenda.

Question 94. On October 26, 2020, an article in the Arizona Daily Independent appeared under your name. In the article, you wrote the following: "Simply put, President Trump has been a Godsend to the faith community."

a. Please elaborate what you mean by "Godsend" in reference to President Trump, and which "faith community" you are referring to when you made that statement.

b. If confirmed, will you respect the Establishment Clause in the U.S. Constitution in all duties related to your position?

Answer. The article speaks for itself. I stand behind the article and President Trump's support for religious freedom. If confirmed, I commit to continue adhering to all provisions of the U.S. Constitution.

Question 95. In your nomination hearing, you commented that the U.S. is facing a "crippling national debt."

a. Do you believe that actions to address the national debt should include cuts to Indian Affairs programs, or programs that support Native communities? If yes, why?

b. Do budgetary cuts proposed through the President's budget request meet the federal government's trust responsibility? If yes, why?

c. Does adding more than \$4 trillion to the national debt following enactment of the President's One Big Beautiful Bill Act help to tackle our nation's "crippling national debt"? If yes, why?

d. Do budgetary cuts proposed through the President's first rescissions package meet the federal government's trust responsibility? If yes, why?

Answer. I support the President's goal of reducing the size the federal government while increasing its accountability to the American people. I am not at the Department, so I cannot speak to the specific impacts of any particular legislation on the bureaus and offices that I will lead if confirmed as Assistant Secretary. However, I will work with the President and Secretary Burgum to ensure that we have appropriate resources to meet our trust responsibilities for Indian Country if I am confirmed.

Question 96. In your written testimony, you stated the following: "If confirmed, I intend to spend my first 90 days listening to Tribal leaders and the Congressional Committees of jurisdiction to understand top priorities and develop a clear action plan."

a. Which Tribal leaders do you intend to work with, and will there be equal representation from Democratic and Republican states?

b. How soon into your first 90 days do you intend to meet with them? Would you meet personally with Tribes? Would you plan to visit Tribal lands during this period? Would you propose a majority of your outreach to Indian country occur through virtual meetings online?

c. How would you measure your success at the end of the first 90 days? What would a successful first 90 days look like to you?

Answer. Indian Country is not a homogenous community—each tribe is distinct with its own identity, history and needs. If I am confirmed, I will have an open-door policy for tribal leaders and members of Congress to engage on issues of concern. With active listening, I will be able to utilize this input to better understand the needs of Indian Country and to prioritize actions of the Office of the Assistant Secretary, if I am confirmed.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. MARIA CANTWELL TO
WILLIAM "BILLY" KIRKLAND

Parity for Tribal Law Enforcement Act

Question 1. One of the biggest threats to Indian Country is the fentanyl crisis. American Indian and Alaska Natives had the highest opioid overdose rates of any ethnic group in the four consecutive years between 2020 and 2023. Just this week,

the DEA in partnership with the Yakama Nation announced charges against thirteen individuals for trafficking fentanyl and other illicit drugs on the Yakama Nation Reservation. In February, the Yakama Nation was selected for an Operation Overdrive investigation. Over the 120-day operation, DEA worked closely with BIA, Yakama Nation and Wapato Police Department to seize over 7,000 pounds of marijuana, 300 pounds of meth, 25 pounds of cocaine, 7 pounds of fentanyl powder, and over 4,700 fentanyl laced pills. According to the Special Agent in Charge, the fentanyl powder and pills alone could have yielded 250,000 lethal doses, enough to kill every member of the Yakama Nation more than eight times over. The operation also yielded incredible success in reducing overdose deaths. In January, the Yakama community experienced 19 overdose deaths, February 14 deaths, March 12 deaths and by June of this year, two deaths. The DEA Special Agent in charge said that this operation was one of the most successful because DEA was able to closely partner with the Tribe and BIA. The Yakama Nation Police Department found a way to dedicate one full-time member of their staff as a DEA Task Force Officer.

The Operation Overdrive investigative work between DEA and the Tribe demonstrates how we can be successful in interdicting illicit drugs in tribal communities if we have enough resources. Unfortunately, we have heard from Tribal communities around the country that they do not have enough law enforcement personnel to respond to calls and dedicate resources to long-term efforts like Operation Overdrive. To meet FBI Community Safety Standards, at least 13,000 more Tribal law enforcement officers are needed nationally.

That is why Senator Mullin and I will be reintroducing the Parity for Tribal Law Enforcement Act next week. This legislation will help tribes recruit and retain law enforcement officers by allowing them to offer Federal benefits that are currently available to local, state, and Federal law enforcement.

- If confirmed, do you commit to working with Senator Mullin and myself to get this bill signed into law?

Answer. I recognize that recruiting and retaining tribal law enforcement officers is important to meet our goals for public safety in Indian Country. As I stated at the hearing, if I am confirmed, I look forward to continuing to learn more about this legislation and working with you and Senator Mullin on it and on shared priorities.

BIA Public Safety Funding

Question 2. Currently, tribal public safety funded at just under 13 percent of the total need. The President's FY 2026 budget proposes additional cuts to BIA public safety and justice programs. This is funding that is used to support essential public safety, such more Tribal police officers and support staff, and for Tribes to have the ability to successfully partner on and pursue operations that protect their communities.

- Yes or no, do you believe funding for Tribal public safety programs should be cut?

Answer. I believe that it is critical that we collaborate closely with tribal leaders to prioritize those needs that they identify as most important, particularly when addressing law enforcement and protecting our tribal communities. If I am confirmed, I commit to working with you and tribes to meet our trust responsibilities and protect native communities.

BIA Public Safety Funding

Question 3. If confirmed, do you commit to advocating for increased funding for BIA Tribal public safety programs?

BIA Public Safety Funding

Question 4. How will you fight back against the Administration's and OMB's efforts to short-change public safety in Indian Country?

Answer to questions 3 and 4. BIA tribal public safety programs play an important role in supporting and protecting tribal communities. If confirmed, I will strongly advocate for ensuring that these programs receive appropriate resources to meet our federal trust responsibilities.

BIA Release of Tribal Hatchery Funding

Question 5. Salmon are woven into the economy and the cultural identity of Tribes throughout the Pacific Northwest. Protecting and restoring salmon and steelhead populations is crucial in meeting the cultural, subsistence, and economic needs of Washington tribes. This is a pillar of upholding our trust and treaty obligations to them as solidified under the Boldt decision 51 years ago. When Congress passed the Inflation Reduction Act, it included \$240 million in hatchery funding for tribes that

I personally worked to secure. Twenty-seven tribes were deemed eligible to receive \$2 million in funding for necessary hatchery improvements. Many of the eligible tribes have not received their funding after repeated attempts to work with the BIA and the Administration. It is critical that the funding is released as soon as possible because the fish construction window is closing.

My understanding is that the hatchery funding is stuck at the BIA and awaiting approval for disbursement.

- If confirmed, will you commit to releasing the funds as soon as possible to the Tribes?

Answer. As I noted at my hearing, if I am confirmed, I will look closely at the processes and protocols of the Bureau of Indian Affairs' grant administration to identify the bottlenecks and figure out how to make the system work more efficiently. We need to work together to make sure that approved funds are delivered efficiently.

Tribal Timber

Question 6. One of President Trump's priorities is to increase domestic timber harvesting and reduce our dependence on Canadian lumber. The Yakama Nation in south central Washington state owns 650,000 acres of timber, the largest forestry stand of any Indian reservation in the United States. They would very much like to support the President's goal of increasing domestic production. They also own one of the last remaining sawmills in the region that employs nearly 200 people. There are two actions by the Bureau of Indian Affairs that are obstructing the Tribe's ability to harvest timber. One is that even prior to DOGE's cutbacks there were about 30 FTEs assigned to the BIA Yakama Agency in the area of natural resources that were vacant. The money is there for the positions but the BIA can't seem to fill them. As a result, the BIA was having a very difficult time overseeing timber sales which then dropped profoundly. Then to make matters worse, and in an action completely contrary to the President's goal of increased domestic timber harvesting, DOGE proposed to RIF even more Yakama Agency BIA employees and to eliminate the vacant FTE positions. Mr. Kirkland, if we could fill those positions the Yakama Nation will 638 contract the entire forestry program, including timber sales, and can readily double or triple the millions of board feet of timber coming off their lands, creating jobs and spurring on the local economy both on and off the reservation.

- Can you commit to working with the Tribe and making the funds associated with the FTEs available to them so that taking over the entire forestry program and increasing timber harvest becomes a viable option for them?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about this issue and working with the Yakama Nation as they seek to increase the domestic production of timber.

Trust and Treaty Obligations

Question 7. Throughout this year, I have heard from tribes throughout Washington state who are deeply concerned about federal commitments to fund vital tribal programs and projects. This includes investments in infrastructure, health care delivery, and investments in habitat and salmon survivability that are essential to meeting our trust responsibility to Washington tribes. There is also uncertainty around whether this Administration will continue to respect the legal and political status of Tribal nations. We need to deliver the investments we have promised to Indian Country. We need to get back on track on improving tribal consultation policies and promoting the rights and needs of Tribes.

- If confirmed, do you commit to upholding your Trust and Treaty responsibilities to our native communities and defend those responsibilities, even if it conflicts with the President's policies or actions?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to advocating for and ensuring that we meet the federal government's trust and treaty obligations to our native communities.

Trust and Treaty Obligations

Question 8. Government-to-Government consultation with tribes is how the United States upholds its Trust and Treaty obligations.

- How do you plan to ensure the Department of Interior, and all federal agencies, thoroughly consult with Tribal nations?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Administration and other federal agencies to emphasize our federal trust responsibilities and the steps to be taken when engaging in consultation with tribal nations. I will also work with tribal leaders to ensure that the outcome works for both the tribes and the agencies.

Trust and Treaty Obligations

Question 9. If confirmed, how will you ensure the Department thoroughly and consistently consults with Tribes, maintains effective government-to-government relationships, and promotes sovereignty and self-determination?

Answer. As I stated at my hearing, effective communication, both within the Department and with Indian Country, is critical to ensure that we are meeting our federal trust responsibilities. Collaboration and meaningful consultation with tribal leaders will be a top priority if I am confirmed as Assistant Secretary.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. TINA SMITH TO
WILLIAM “BILLY” KIRKLAND

Question 1. Did you personally delete any social media accounts, posts, podcasts, or other content in anticipation of or after your nomination? Did you ask anyone else to do so on your behalf?

Answer. In January I deactivated Facebook and X accounts. I have not asked for posts or podcasts to be deleted.

Question 2. What was the exact date of the termination of your political appointment that began July 2018?

Answer. Upon further review of my records, I can confirm my last day of federal service was October 15, 2019.

Question 3. Did you accept new clients, either as an individual consultant or through PWK, LLC, during your previous political appointment?

Answer. No.

Question 4. Do you commit to adequately staffing BIA headquarters and regional offices to meet the agency’s trust and treaty obligations to Tribal Nations?

Answer. I commit to ensuring, if I am confirmed, that the Bureau of Indian Affairs has the appropriate staffing to meet our federal trust responsibilities.

Question 5. Do you commit to protecting Tribes’ treaty rights outside of their reservations, including and especially related to mineral exploration and extraction?

Answer. If I am confirmed, I will work closely with tribal leaders to ensure that we are meeting our federal trust responsibilities in accordance with law.

Question 6. What exact role did you plan in the negotiations and implementation of the CARES Act?

Answer. I was proud to be a part of the first Trump Administration, re-election campaign, and the 2024 campaign. During the CARES Act negotiations and implementation, I was no longer working at the White House, but because of my previous role, I was in contact with multiple tribes, tribal leaders and tribal representatives in an unpaid capacity to help them think through the best course of action when it came to CARES Act funding for their tribes. I also remained in contact with the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Question 7. What do you see as BIA’s responsibilities to states covered by P.L. 280?

Answer. I am not at the Department and not versed in the nuances of this statute, but if confirmed, would welcome the opportunity to learn more about it as it relates to the BIA.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. BEN RAY LUJÁN TO
WILLIAM “BILLY” KIRKLAND

Question 1. During our exchange, we discussed your involvement in the CARES Act and Tribal funding, which was added to the legislation after your time at the White House. Please clarify your role and what you did specifically to ensure funding for Tribes in the CARES Act.

Answer. I was proud to be a part of the first Trump Administration, re-election campaign, and the 2024 campaign. During the CARES Act negotiations and implementation, I was no longer working at the White House, but because of my previous role, I was in contact with multiple tribes, tribal leaders and tribal representatives in an unpaid capacity to help them think through the best course of action when it came to CARES Act funding for their tribes. I also remained in contact with the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Question 2. You say in your testimony that the Trump Administration was the first Administration to officially recognize the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW). Please clarify this as I am aware of efforts going back to the Clinton Administration to recognize this crisis.

Answer. While advocacy groups and tribal leaders had raised awareness about the violence against Native women in previous administrations, President Trump was the first president to issue an Executive Order forming a Presidential Task Force on Missing and Murdered American Indian and Alaska Natives and to establish and fund a federal office, the Cold Case Task Force Office, dedicated to missing and murdered Indigenous people, particularly missing and murdered women and girls. In 2020, President Trump signed Savanna's Act and the Not Invisible Act, building on the momentum established by his Executive Order.

Question 3. Please outline your efforts and work with the Department of the Interior, the Department of Justice, or any other agencies with which you worked on the MMIW crisis during your time at the White House.

Answer. During the lead up to President Trump issuing an executive order establishing Operation Lady Justice, I worked with tribal leaders and tribal representatives and with the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs as they consulted with the Department of the Interior and other federal agencies and planned regional meetings and consultations on this critical issue.

Question 4. According to DOJ, at the beginning of Fiscal Year 2025, FBI's Indian Country program had approximately 4,300 open investigations, including over 900 death investigations, 1,000 child abuse investigations, and more than 500 domestic violence and adult sexual abuse investigations. If you are confirmed, what is your plan to address this backlog of investigations in coordination with DOJ?

Answer. Violent crime and abuse suffered by Native American communities is a tragedy. If confirmed, I will quickly be brought up to speed on this longstanding issue. I will build upon my past experience and relationships I have established with tribal leaders and government officials to work closely with tribal governments, the Department and interagency partners including the Department of Justice to ensure Indian Country has the resources it needs to keep Native families safe.

Question 5. How will you work with DOJ, HHS, and other agencies with public safety responsibilities, including preventing violence against women and families, to American Indians, Native Hawaiians, and Alaska Natives?

Answer. As I noted above, if confirmed, I will build upon my past experience and relationships I have established with tribal leaders and government officials to work closely with tribal governments, the Department and interagency partners including the Department of Justice to ensure Indian Country has the resources it needs to keep native families safe.

Question 6. Please clarify your working relationship with Ralph Reed and explain why you chose to work for an organization led by him after high profile allegations related to fraud and other wrongdoing were alleged against Reed.

Answer. The Faith & Freedom Coalition is committed to educating, equipping, and mobilizing voters of faith. It promotes lowering the tax burden on small businesses and families while promoting family values and requiring the government to spend responsibly. While at the Faith & Freedom Coalition, I served as the National Field Director. We worked to educate voters and encouraged them to vote. Ralph Reed served as the Chairman of the organization.

Question 7. During our exchange, we discussed Indian Water Rights Settlements and the importance of living up to our Trust responsibility. We discussed the Navajo-Gallup Water Settlement, but you asked me to clarify the other number of settlements in New Mexico. Please see below for a list of the Indian Water Rights Settlements in New Mexico.

A. If confirmed, will you advocate for funding and completion of the Navajo-Gallup Water Project and others?

B. Will you advocate to make funding of water settlements mandatory?

Information on New Mexico's water rights settlements

In total, New Mexico has seven recognized Indian (tribal/Pueblo) water rights settlements, as listed by the *New Mexico Office of the State Engineer*.

Settlement Name	Tribes/Pueblos Covered
Aamodt Water Rights Settlement	Nambé, Pojoaque, Tesuque, San Ildefonso
Taos Pueblo Water Rights Settlement	Taos
San Juan Basin/Navajo Nation Settlement	Navajo Nation
Zuni Tribe Water Rights Settlement	Zuni Tribe
Ohkay Owingeh Rio Chama Settlement	Ohkay Owingeh
Rio San José Stream System Local Settlement	Acoma & Laguna Pueblos

Settlement Name	Tribes/Pueblos Covered
Pueblos of Jemez & Zia Water Rights Settlement	Jemez & Zia

These seven represent the major formally negotiated and approved agreements in New Mexico. The first three (Aamodt, Taos, Navajo-San Juan) were resolved earlier, while the Zuni, Ohkay Owingeh (Rio Chama), Rio San José, and Jemez & Zia settlements are more recent-some pending or recently approved at the federal level.

Answer. I understand that negotiated Indian water rights settlements can resolve lengthy, contentious litigation among tribes and surrounding communities, provide certainty to water users and support tribal sovereignty and self-determination. And I appreciate the information provided regarding the scope of Indian Water Rights Settlements in New Mexico. If confirmed, I would work to ensure federal responsibilities provided in enacted water rights settlements, including those in New Mexico, are met so that tribes have access to clean, reliable water supplies.

Question 8. How will you advocate for ongoing and future Indian water rights settlements, if confirmed, in your role as a member of the DOI Working Group on Indian Water Rights Settlements?

a. Will this advocacy include sufficient and statutory funding for such settlements?

Answer. While I am not at the Department, I understand that the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs is a member of the Working Group which makes recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior on Indian water rights settlements and settlement policy. If confirmed, I would look forward to being briefed on this important subject and to working with my colleagues in the Department and the Administration to determine appropriate funding levels.

