

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 26, 2025

President Donald J. Trump

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20500

Secretary Doug Burgum

Department of the Interior

1849 C Street, N.W.

Washington DC 20240

Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

Department of Health and Human Services

200 Independence Avenue, S.W.

Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear President Trump, Secretary Burgum, and Secretary Kennedy:

We write to you today to urge you to take immediate action to halt, exempt, and reverse from existing or future executive actions any federal offices, services, or funding that serve Indian Country, as these positions and programs are essential to the administration of legally mandated Tribal programs and services.

We are gravely concerned about the implementation of recent Executive Orders (EO), including EO 14210 entitled *“Implementing the President’s “Department of Government Efficiency” Workforce Optimization Initiative,”* and the implications of reductions in the federal workforce and funding for Indian Country. As you know, the U.S. government has both trust and treaty responsibilities to Tribal Nations. These responsibilities are implemented by agencies including the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), Indian Health Service (IHS), and others, providing critical healthcare, education, and social services to Tribal communities. Your administration’s recent executive actions undermine legally required commitments to sovereign Tribal Nations, existing federal law, and the federal-Tribal government-to-government relationship.

In the past month, your administration has taken aim at thousands of federal workers across various government agencies. Reports indicate that this includes more than 2,600 federal employees at the Department of the Interior, including more than 100 Bureau of Indian Affairs employees, more than 40 Bureau of Indian Education employees, several employees at the Office of Indian Affairs, as well as social workers, firefighters, and police that work on behalf of Indian Country, plus some 950 Indian Health Service employees at the Department of Health and Human Services. There have also been reports of layoffs at Tribal Colleges and Universities, including dozens of educators at both Haskell Indian Nations University and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute which are operated by the Bureau of Indian Education.

Independent federal oversight entities, such as the Office of the Special Counsel, have already deemed some of these firings to be unlawful. Beyond the legal questions surrounding the ability to fire employees without specifying performance or conduct issues, any unilateral attempts to disrupt existing services administered or funded by the BIA, BIE, IHS, or other Tribal-serving entities would directly violate the trust and treaty obligations of the United States to Tribal Nations.

Tribal Nations are sovereign governments with a unique legal and political relationship to the United States. The inherent sovereignty of Tribes is recognized in the U.S. Constitution, in treaties, and across many federal laws and policies, and it has been consistently upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. These trust and treaty obligations in some cases predate both the establishment of all of the agencies in question as well as the United States itself. Pursuant to those legal obligations, the U.S. must adequately fund and staff agencies that provide these essential services and programs, including at BIA, BIE, and IHS.

We have many concerns about the legality of the administration's recent actions and, importantly, the ways in which those actions impact the sovereignty, self-determination, and trust and treaty obligations for Indian Country. The implementation of these obligations is a vital, non-discretionary part of federal law and the federal budget. This is not a partisan issue. We urge your administration to immediately halt, exempt, and reverse any federal workforce or federal funding reductions for Tribal programs or services and to engage in formal consultation with affected Tribal Nations at the government-to-government level. Any attempts to unilaterally dismantle or undermine these programs violates trust and treaty obligations, the U.S. Constitution, and centuries of legal precedent.

Sincerely,



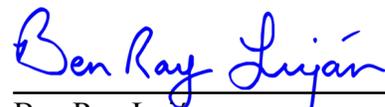
Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



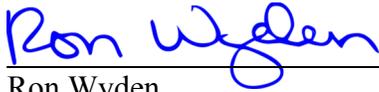
Amy Klobuchar
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Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Ruben Gallego
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



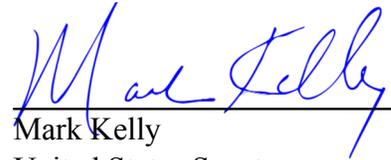
Nancy Pelosi
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress
Ranking Member, House Natural
Resources Committee



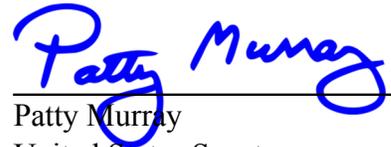
Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator



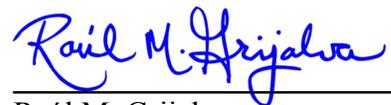
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Joe Neguse
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Sharice L. Davids
Member of Congress
Kansas Third District



Greg Stanton
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Laura Friedman
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Val Hoyle
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JM Tokuda
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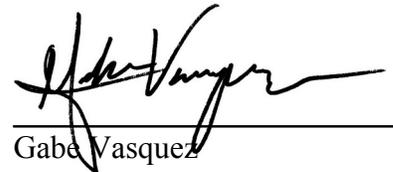
Rashida Tlaib
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Gabe Vasquez
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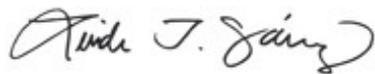
Salud Carbajal
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Robert Garcia
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Teresa Leger Fernandez
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Linda T. Sánchez
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Nanette Diaz Barragán
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Andrea Salinas
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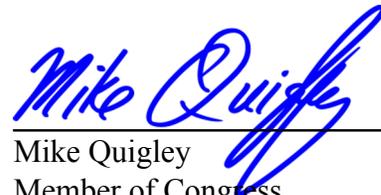
Nydia M. Velázquez
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Sylvia R. Garcia
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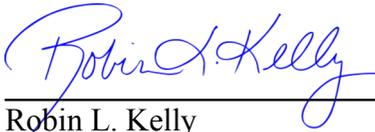
MARK TAKANO
Member of Congress



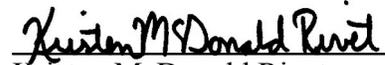
Kevin Mullin
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly
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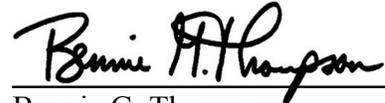
Robin L. Kelly
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Kristen McDonald Rivet
Member of Congress



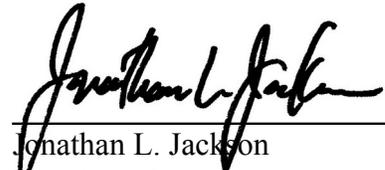
Yvette D. Clarke
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Bennie G. Thompson
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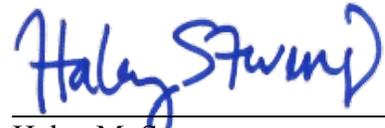
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Jan Schakowsky
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Haley M. Stevens
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Diana DeGette
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Becca Balint
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Andre Carson
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Derek T. Tran
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Pramila Jayapal
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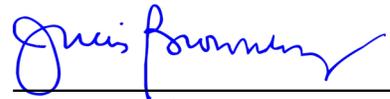
Mikie Sherrill
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Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



Mike Levin
Member of Congress



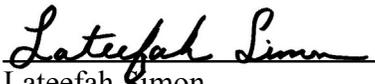
Julia Brownley
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Dave Min
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John Garamendi
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Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



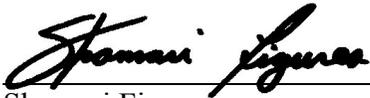
Jim Costa
Member of Congress



Valerie P. Foushee
Member of Congress



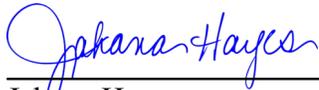
Kathy Castor
Member of Congress



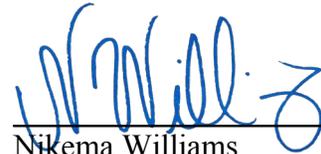
Shomari Figures
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Nikema Williams
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Seth Magaziner
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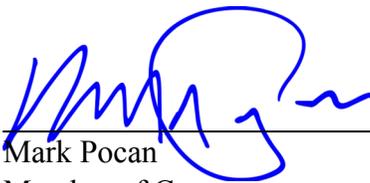
Sean Casten
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Sarah McBride
Member of Congress



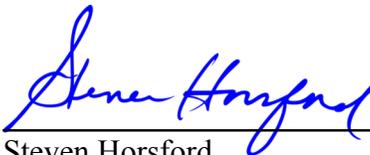
Brad Sherman
Member of Congress



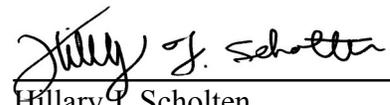
Mark Pocan
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Ro Khanna
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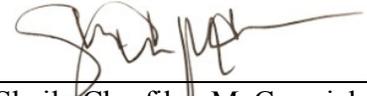
Steven Horsford
Member of Congress
Nevada's Fourth Congressional
District



Hillary J. Scholten
Member of Congress



Maxine Dexter
Member of Congress



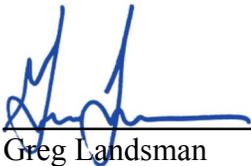
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