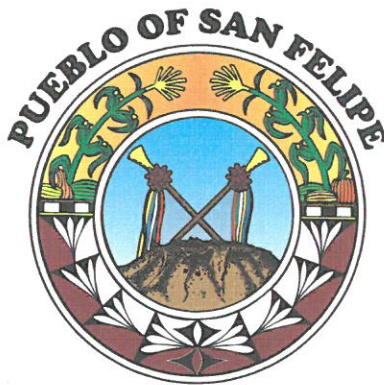


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## Office of the Governor

June 25, 2018

John Tahsuda III  
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs  
United States Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W. MS-4004-MIB  
Washington, D.C. 20240

RE: Proposed DOI Reorganization

Dear Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Tahsuda:

More than any other people in the United States, Indian tribes know the Department of Interior (DOI). For better or worse, federal law and policy directly affect our health, education, religious practice, cultural values, protection of our ancestor's graves from continuous affront, our water rights, tribal historic and cultural preservation (THPO), land ownership and status, and more. The DOI must keep in the forefront of all considerations the legal and moral obligations the Federal Government has to tribes. As presented at today's listening session in Albuquerque, tribes appear to be an afterthought in the DOI reorganization process, and tribal concerns appear to be thought of in terms of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) only.

We have several times requested to meet with Secretary Zinke and have been rebuffed. We have written several letters to Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Tahsuda and have received no reply. The current Administration has shown disregard for what is dear to us by their actions at Standing Rock, Bears Ears, and through proposed budget cuts to BIA, Indian Health Service (IHS) and Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). We see that the political relationship the Federal Government has to Indian Nations is not understood or respected.

From the limited information available, the DOI Reorganization as proposed does not meaningfully consider federally recognized tribes, but rather lines are being drawn to benefit extractive industry and to score political points at the expense of Indian people. Today we were told: "This is happening, but tribal leaders can request to keep BIA out of the plan". If it is a well thought out plan, for the benefit of the tribes, why wouldn't we want to move forward? The BIA is essential because of the way federal law is structured, but it is underfunded, under staffed and at times keeps tribes from progressing.

We interact with DOI agencies on a daily basis and many do not consider tribes in all decisions, instead tribal consultation is an afterthought, or last on the list. It is left to Archaeologists and Liaisons to read the Tribal Consultation Manuals and make excuses as to why those manual are not being followed.

If DOI truly wanted to have a mission of “Respecting and supporting Tribal sovereignty” this Reorganization proposal would look very different, and would include placeholders for ensuring tribal perspectives, needs, and values were included at every step. Splitting the Navajo Nation or combining Navajo, Ute and Pueblos into one region will not benefit or better serve any of these populations as the structure, capacity, government operations and priorities are different.

Rotating political appointees (who may have no knowledge of tribes or tribal governments) tasked with overseeing condensed Unified Regions could easily increase the number of appeals and protests tribes are required to file against the Department and draw vital funds from the “front lines” to another layer of bureaucracy; having devastating effects on vulnerable tribal populations.

The functions of DOI directly affect tribes and the lives of individual tribal members: education, religious practice and values, ancestral tribal land protection, water, THPO and NAGPRA.

While improvements are needed to advance how DOI agencies uphold their trust responsibilities and provide services to tribes; cutting funding and staff, redrawing lines with no consideration to the tribes within the regions, and further opening public land - which is ancestral Indian land - to industry will not improve the lives of Native Americans, and therefore will not meet the stated goal of improving services for the American People.

We are requesting:

1. Information on how tribes will be included and considered in the entire DOI Reorganization – not just BIA.
2. Information on how BIA leadership is advocating for tribes in this process.
3. Information on how BIA Agency and Regional offices will not be eliminated under this proposal
4. The comments made at today’s and previous listening sessions be made available, and
5. Information on how tribal comments will be taken into consideration as the planning develops.

We look forward to beginning consultation on this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact Daryl Candelaria, Tribal Administrator at (505) 867-3381 for additional information.

Sincerely,  
Pueblo of San Felipe



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Anthony Ortiz, Governor

cc: NM Senate and Congressional Delegation