



AFFILIATED TRIBES OF NORTHWEST INDIANS

Dedicated to tribal sovereignty and self-determination since 1953

January 30, 2025

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The Honorable Susan Collins, Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole, Chairman
U.S. House Appropriations Committee
2207 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray, Vice Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro,
Ranking Member
2413 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Exempt Tribal Nations from any Decisions that would Disrupt Federal Funds

Dear Senator Collins, Senator Murray, Representative Cole, and Representative DeLauro:

The Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians has grave concerns about the disruption and confusion that recent Administration actions have inflicted on our members and their Tribal Nations.

Indian Tribes are enshrined in the U.S. Constitution and are sovereign governments that not only provide for our communities, but for our non-Indian neighbors as well. As Justice Neil Gorsuch has written, the U.S. Constitution “reserves for the Tribes a place—an enduring place—in the structure of American life...” and that the federal government, “operates against the backdrop understanding that Tribes are sovereign.” This could not be a more accurate description of Tribal governments in the Pacific Northwest.

Our Tribes are among the largest employers in the region, the most proficient habitat managers and providers of salmon, and the most aggressive protectors of forest land from wildfires.

Our Tribes, in most cases, provide these benefits under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975, a landmark achievement of President Gerald Ford that has allowed Indian Tribes to perform federal functions more efficiently and more cost effectively than the federal government. This law and the underlying federal funds are based on the unique trust responsibility that United States government has with Indian Tribes—a relationship grounded in the Constitution, treaties, Executive Orders, and other federal laws.

ATNI requests that, in implementing the Executive Orders that have already been issued and in considering new executive action, the Administration categorically exempt Indian Tribes from any decisions that would disrupt federal funds that Congress has already appropriated or that federal agencies have set aside for the Tribes’ benefit.



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ATNI stands ready and willing to provide additional information and further educate your Administration on these critical issues.

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ATNI was founded in 1953 and is dedicated to the protection and advancement of Tribal sovereignty and self-determination. ATNI is a nonprofit organization that serves 57 Tribal nations in the greater Northwest that includes Tribes in Oregon, Idaho, Washington, Alaska, California, and Montana. For more than 70 years, the member Tribes of ATNI have provided regional leadership and advocacy for Northwest Tribal interests.

This letter was approved by the Member Tribes at the ATNI 2025 Winter Convention in Portland, Oregon on January 30, 2025.

Sincerely,

Leonard Forsman, ATNI President

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Executive Director

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