

**Vivian Korthius, CEO at Association of Village Council
Presidents : Senate Committee on Indian Affairs (SCIA)
Roundtable Senate Event-Anchorage, Alaska
August 14, 2025**

1. Introduction and Gratitude

- My name is Vivian Korthuis. I serve as the Chief Executive Officer for the Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP). I am Yup'ik and a member of the Emmonak Tribe.
- Thank you for hosting this roundtable opportunity to discuss the Native Children's Commission Implementation Act comprehensive draft legislative package focused on advancing the well-being and future opportunities of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children.
- Special thanks for including the Tiwahe program, which is crucial for Native communities.

2. AVCP and Tiwahe Program

- The Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) is the largest Tribal consortium in the nation, representing 56 Federally Recognized Tribes on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, Alaska.
- AVCP fully supports the authorization and expansion of the Tiwahe program.

3. Impact of Tiwahe on AVCP

- From 2005 to 2015, AVCP saw enormous growth in programs and the need for services, but there was no investment in administrative infrastructure due to underfunded administrative costs and heavy grant and program restrictions.
- By 2015, AVCP had 157 open grant streams supporting 26 individual programs providing services which were siloed by funding sources.
- AVCP consists of 48 communities in extreme rural America, with approximately 30,000 Tribal Members.
- In our region, there was lack of broadband infrastructure including reliable phone and fax systems, and only recently stable internet services has been introduced.
- Before 2015, there was no coordinated AVCP-wide communication system, and most programs had no software system, relying on Excel spreadsheets with no ability to share information.
- Due to the lack of support for the administrative structure, AVCP was choked in its ability to provide services efficiently.

4. Transformation Under Tiwahe

- In 2015, AVCP's Program Staff and Administration created the Tiwahe Proposal after learning about a new program offered to streamline service delivery through the BIA.
- AVCP's Executive Board initiated the Quality Improvement Process (QIP) in January 2016, recognizing that quality improvement, programmatic, and fiscal compliance were key to the success of providing quality services to customers.
- AVCP started re-engineering services under the Tiwahe Initiative, evaluating every aspect of operations and program services.
- Under Tiwahe, AVCP successfully restructured internal programs from 26 departments in 2016 to clustering similar programs into 6 Divisions, fostering collaboration and improving service delivery. This change took time.
- Tiwahe has been the catalyst for these transformative and impactful changes at AVCP, providing the support needed to do this work.

5. Success of Tiwahe Pilot Sites

- Since the inception of the Tiwahe project, AVCP has been working closely with the other 5 pilot "demonstration" sites to support one another in executing the Tiwahe program in ways that each community needs.
- Tiwahe allows Tribes and Tribal Organizations to develop comprehensive plans to enhance service delivery across multiple or all family-centered programming.
- Self-governance compacts under DOI allow Tribes and Tribal Organizations to take over BIA/BIE government services and design the service delivery in a way that fits our Tribe's and region's needs.
- Tiwahe allows a Tribe or Tribal Organization to design a fully comprehensive service delivery model to support our families and children by supporting the necessary infrastructure.

6. Need for Expansion and Funding

- Despite its success, Tiwahe remains underfunded and needs to be expanded to more Tribal communities.
- Increased investment in Tiwahe is essential to support more Tribes and ensure the program's sustainability.

7. Legislative Support and Recommendations

- AVCP supports this comprehensive legislation draft that will authorize and expand Tiwahe, ensuring it becomes a permanent program with permanent funding.
- However, Tiwahe funding amounts need to be increased to add more demonstration Tribes each year and provide additional resources for all Tribes under Social

Services and ICWA. The legislative proposal funding amount should consider the future of all Tribes under Tiwahe.

- The draft legislation should ensure provisions for additional across-the-board funding for all tribes under Social Services and ICWA, as well as other Tiwahe programs.
- The formation of a Tiwahe Leadership Council under the direction of the Secretary is essential to carry this great work forward.

8. Efficiency and Trust Responsibility

- AVCP appreciates the main point of this legislative package as it relates to the Tiwahe Program, which supports the efficiency that the current federal administration desires.
- There is a high trust responsibility, and Tiwahe fulfills this by allowing for the autonomy of Tribes to function efficiently and enabling agencies to streamline services.
- Tiwahe reflects the true intention of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA), which is to promote self-governance and self-determination for Tribes.
- The legislative language discusses different methods to streamline federal funding so that Tribes have the flexibility to do the work locally. This is important and should be emphasized as this proposed draft progresses.

9. In Conclusion...

- The Tiwahe program is a proven model that empowers Native families and strengthens Tribal communities.
- AVCP stands in support of the intent of this comprehensive package and will continue to work with you and your staff to recommend key areas that may need modification so that this package will find success as it moves toward finalization.
- We look forward to working in partnership to see this legislation through to its final form.

Thank you again for the invitation to speak.