

**STATEMENT OF
BRYAN NEWLAND
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR INDIAN AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BEFORE THE UNITED STATES
SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS**

March 29, 2023

Aanii (Hello)! Good afternoon, Chairman Schatz, Vice Chairman Murkowski, and members of the Committee. My name is Bryan Newland, and I am the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the U.S. Department of the Interior (Department). Thank you for the opportunity to present the Department's testimony at this important oversight hearing, "The Future of Tribal Energy Development: Implementation of the Inflation Reduction Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law."

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) is an historic law that includes transformational investments to address the climate crisis, lower costs for working families, and create good-paying jobs. Combined with the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), these two initiatives represent the largest investments in climate resilience in the nation's history and provide a once-in-a-generation opportunity for the work of the Department.

Overall, the Department will receive \$6.6 billion in direct funding through the IRA. This funding will help bureaus and offices across the Department to transition to a clean energy economy, advance key habitat restoration and resilience projects, and secure environmental justice for historically disadvantaged communities. Of the funding provided to the Department, \$150 million is provided for the Bureau of Indian Affairs for a new Tribal Electrification Program.

The Tribal Electrification Program will coordinate financial and technical assistance to Tribes to increase the number of Tribal homes with zero emission electricity. The need across Indian Country is significant. In 2000, the Energy Information Administration issued a report which estimated that 14 percent of households on Native American reservations had no access to electricity, this was 10 times higher than the national average. In 2022 the Department of Energy Office of Indian Energy issued a report citing that 16, 805 total Tribal homes were unelectrified with most being in the Southwest region and Alaska. Specifically, 21% of Navajo Nation homes and 35% of Hopi Indian Tribe homes are unelectrified. Access to electricity will improve the health, welfare, education, and overall lives of Native Americans. Whereas running water, reliable lighting, modern forms of home heating and cooling, and appliances such as refrigerators and microwaves were simply out of reach, with electrification, Native American families can stop traveling hundreds of miles to procure water and will be able to retire their portable coolers filled with ice to preserve their food. Recognizing each Tribe has its own energy and electrification related needs and implementation capacity, the program will work to meet the unique needs of individual Tribal communities.

Our goal in implementing the Tribal Electrification Program is to ensure we maximize the impact of the funds while working to meet the need to deliver electricity to Tribal homes. We also aim to deploy the funding quickly while also fulfilling our commitment to meaningfully consult with Tribes. The Department held two consultations on the IRA programs in December 2022 and intends to host additional listening sessions in April. Our plan is to offer two-year funding in two separate rounds for electrification projects with half to be obligated by the end of fiscal year 2023 and all funds obligated by the end of fiscal year 2025.

The Department conducted consultation with Tribes to understand the unique energy and electrification needs as well as implementation capacity. Funding will be awarded through a competitive proposal process to be deployed via Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act and Tribal Self Governance Act of 1994 agreements, using varied criteria, and supported by technical assistance. We estimate it will cost roughly \$70,000 per home to deliver electricity to homes that are not already on or immediately near a power grid or wired for electricity. To maximize impacts with the \$150 million available from the IRA, we will use a project-based process to focus on funding projects that can deliver electricity to the most homes across Indian Country. Projects may range from implementation-ready to ones that require support to develop implementation capacity. Technical assistance will be provided to further support the Tribes as they work through their communities' projects with focus on those Tribes that lack sufficient project development and implementation capacity.

The Department has been coordinating and collaborating as appropriate with other federal agencies in the implementation of BIL and IRA funds. The need for coordination has been a consistent theme in consultations with Tribes and supports our commitment to ensure these historic investments reach as many homes as possible. We have worked closely with the Department of Energy, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and Department of Agriculture to coordinate our consultations and funding announcements. We will continue to coordinate and host joint listening sessions as appropriate.

Conclusion

The Department commends the work of Congress to enact the IRA and BIL with historic funding and we look forward to continuing our work with Tribes, our federal partners, and the Committee to ensure the energy needs of Tribes are met.