



Department of Justice

STATEMENT

OF

THOMAS J. PERRELLI
ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY GENERAL

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

HEARING ENTITLED

"OVERSIGHT TO EXAMINE TRIBAL PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES PROPOSED
IN THE PRESIDENT'S FISCAL YEAR 2011 BUDGET"

PRESENTED ON

FEBRUARY 25, 2010

**TESTIMONY OF
THOMAS J. PERRELLI
ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY GENERAL
Before the
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
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At a Hearing Entitled
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IN THE PRESIDENT’S FISCAL YEAR 2011 BUDGET”
February 25, 2010**

Chairman Dorgan, Vice-Chairman Barrasso, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for inviting me to testify today regarding the unprecedented support that the President’s FY 2011 Budget provides to the Department of Justice for public safety initiatives in tribal communities. As I have previously discussed with the Committee, the Department of Justice is deeply committed to working with tribal governments to improve public safety in Indian Country. And while we will continue to implement changes that do not cost American tax dollars, the reality is that resources make a difference. In order to achieve lasting results, funding for public safety must be broad and across the board.

We are working to put resources in place quickly and efficiently to help American Indian and Alaska Native communities help themselves. In total, the President’s FY 2011 Budget includes \$449 million in resources to assist Indian Country. It includes funds (provided by the Department of the Interior) for 45 new FBI agents to support law enforcement efforts in Indian Country, maintains the increased number of Assistant U.S. Attorneys in Indian Country that the Department will add in 2010 as a result of the support of members of this Committee, and increases grant funding in Indian Country by 54%. The President’s FY 2011 Budget provides for a 7% set-aside – \$42 million – from the COPS Hiring Program to support the hiring of tribal law enforcement personnel, an additional 7% set-aside – \$139.5 million – from our Office of

Justice Programs (OJP) for Indian Country efforts, and statutory set-asides totaling \$42.1 million for certain Office on Violence Against Women programs. These set-asides, combined with numerous Department of Justice programs designed exclusively for tribal communities result in a total request of \$255.6 million for Department of Justice grant programs in Indian Country.

While the amount of funding is significant, so are our plans to distribute it. At our listening session in October, at the White House Tribal Nations Conference in November, and in subsequent meetings and discussions with tribal leaders, we have consistently heard a strong desire for more flexible grant programs to meet tribal communities' needs more effectively. We have been engaged in a consultation process for FY2010 to streamline our grantmaking process, and the President's FY 2011 Budget will enable the Department to implement a large, flexible, program that directly addresses the requests of many tribal leaders.

The President's Budget also supports the Department of Justice's extensive outreach efforts to educate tribal communities about its Radiation Exposure Compensation Program. The Department seeks additional funds for its Community Relations Service to expand efforts to resolve disputes in Indian Country arising from discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin. And as part of the Department's efforts to institutionalize its Office of Tribal Justice (OTJ) and better manage its Indian Country initiative, the Department is seeking additional staffing to support OTJ's expanding responsibilities.

As the President has made clear, these are lean budget times. However, as this Committee knows, we must invest today to improve public safety in tribal communities. The problems in tribal communities are severe: American Indian and Alaska Native communities suffer from violent crime at far higher rates than other Americans. Some tribes have experienced rates of violent crime twice, four times, and in some cases over 10 times the national average;

violence against Native women and children is a particular problem, with some counties facing murder rates against Native women well over 10 times the national average; and reservation-based and clinical research show very high rates of intimate-partner violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women.

These problems will not be solved overnight, and money alone will not solve them. But money will enable FBI and other law enforcement agents to investigate crimes committed on Reservations. Money will help train prosecutors of violent crimes perpetrated against Indian women. Money will help us collect and analyze the data that will inform better public safety policies. And money will build capacity in tribal communities so that they can work with their federal partners on improving public safety.

I thank the Committee for its interest in these critical issues and its support.