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March 11, 2024

The Honorable Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

I am writing to request that the Government Accountability Office undertake a study of DOE's Tribal Energy Loan Guarantee Program (TELGP)—a program designed to support tribal investment in energy-related projects. Through this program, DOE can provide direct loans or loan guarantees to federally recognized Tribes, including Alaska Native villages or regional or village corporations, to support a broad range of projects such as solar projects, wind farms, mining and fossil energy production, and transmission and distribution, among others.

DOE announced its first loan guarantee solicitation for the Tribal Energy Loan Guarantee Program in July 2018, and the Inflation Reduction Act increased the program's available loan authority from \$2 billion to \$20 billion. Nevertheless, as of the end of 2023, no loans or loan guarantees have been issued under this program. Congress and others have raised concerns about DOE's administration of the program, including potentially burdensome program requirements that discourage Tribes from submitting applications, as well as insufficient outreach to build Tribal awareness of the program.

To improve access to the program, Congress and DOE have made several changes to it over time, including providing DOE authority for direct lending to supplement its loan guarantee authority, as well as eliminating application and other fees payable to DOE. In addition, according to DOE, the department has improved its outreach to Tribal leaders by soliciting feedback about the proposed design of TELGP, conducting one-on-one meetings with Tribal leaders to better understand areas of need, and participating in Tribal energy summits and events. Through the first three months of FY 2023, 270 outreach meetings were held and four applications were officially submitted, totaling nearly \$500 million dollars in requested TELGP financing.

Given the lack of loans and loan guarantees provided through TELGP and in order to capitalize on the increase in loan authority provided in the Inflation Reduction Act, we ask that GAO assess the following:

- What are Tribe, lender, and stakeholder views on the strengths and limitations of the Tribal Energy Loan Guarantee Program?
- What steps could Congress or DOE take to improve the design and implementation of the program to make it more useful to Tribes and increase tribal interest?
- What is the status of applications and issued loans and loan guarantees?

- What steps has DOE taken to conduct outreach to Tribes and lenders about the program in order to build awareness of and interest in the program?

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lisa Murkowski".

Lisa Murkowski
Vice Chairman
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs