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Udall Holds Roundtable on Opioid Crisis in Indian Country

Presses administration for action to help Native communities fight the opioid epidemic

WASHINGTON — Today, U.S. Senator Tom Udall, vice chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, hosted a roundtable discussion to hear from and learn about best practices from Tribes, the federal government, and industry for responding to the opioid crisis in Indian Country. Udall pressed administration officials on what specific actions they have taken since the president's declaration of a public health emergency to help address the opioid epidemic in Native communities.

Following the roundtable discussion, Udall issued the following statement:

“I am deeply appreciative of all the panelists who joined us today — including Acoma Pueblo Governor Kurt Riley, who travelled from New Mexico — to discuss how we can work together to combat the opioid epidemic in Indian Country. Every day, Native communities are being forced to confront the devastating toll of the opioid crisis, and the federal government is not doing nearly enough to help or to fulfill its trust responsibilities. This tragic epidemic has hit Indian Country harder than anywhere else: American Indians and Alaska Natives are overdosing on opioids at the highest rate in the United States. Today we heard from Tribal leaders and concerned stakeholders who

made it very clear that while some Tribes are having success implementing culturally relevant treatment programs, there is a huge unmet need that needs to be addressed. Despite the president's tough talk and big promises, the administration has yet to make any request for actual additional funding from Congress to combat opioid abuse and addiction. We need to dedicate strong resources directly to Indian Country to fight this crisis, and we need to do so urgently.

“Together, we can win the battle against addiction in Indian Country, but only if we devote the real resources and action that are needed beyond just lip service. We know we can overcome this crisis and we know there are solutions. Tribes like the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians have started the development of a Tribal residential treatment center, emphasizing long-term care and cultural immersion. The White Earth Maternal Outreach and Mitigation Services, or MOMS, Program has benefitted at least 48 mothers, babies, and families through culturally informed prenatal care and addiction treatment. We need to ensure that everyone who wants treatment can get it – and that means investing in the prevention, treatment, and enforcement programs that work. It also means working to build a stronger economy in Indian Country, and ensuring that the federal government is upholding its trust responsibility to provide quality health care to Native communities.

“The government’s response to this crisis needs to be robust and must include effective solutions for Indian Country. The administration – and leaders in Congress – need to step up to the plate.”

His comments at the roundtable follow Udall’s [response](#) to the President Trump’s October 27, 2017, declaration of a public health emergency. Udall

called for the administration to put real new resources behind the declaration and supported legislation in Congress to dedicate \$45 billion nationwide for prevention, detection, surveillance, and treatment of opioid addiction.