

**NOMINATION OF TARA MAC LEAN SWEENEY  
OF ALASKA TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY,  
INDIAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE  
INTERIOR**

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**HEARING**

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS  
UNITED STATES SENATE**

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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MAY 9, 2018  
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Printed for the use of the Committee on Indian Affairs



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**NOMINATION OF TARA MAC LEAN SWEENEY  
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WEDNESDAY, MAY 9, 2018

U.S. SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 4:10 p.m. in room 628, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. John Hoeven, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN HOEVEN,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM NORTH DAKOTA**

The CHAIRMAN. Good afternoon. I call this nomination hearing to order.

Today, the Committee will hear from Ms. Tara Mac Lean Sweeney of Alaska, who has been nominated to be the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs in the Department of the Interior.

Welcome. Thank you for being here today. We appreciate it so much.

The Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs leads Interior's initiatives across Indian Country. On October 17, 2017, President Donald Trump nominated Ms. Sweeney to the position.

Ms. Sweeney grew up in rural Alaska and is a member of the Native Village of Barrow. I have been there along with Senator Murkowski, a great trip. She is also a member of the Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope. If confirmed, she would be the first Alaska Native and second woman to hold the position.

Actively engaged in State and national policy development, Ms. Sweeney has been involved in responsible Indian energy policy initiatives, rural broadband connectivity, Arctic growth, and Native American self-determination.

She has served her Arctic Slope Regional Corporation and its subsidiaries in a variety of capacities for nearly two decades. The \$2.6 billion corporation is the largest locally-owned and operated business in Alaska, with about 13,000 Inupiat Eskimo members and 12,000 employees worldwide.

It is diversified in six major business sectors, including energy support services, industrial services, construction, petroleum refining and marketing, government services, and resource development.

In her current role as the Executive Vice President of External Affairs, Ms. Sweeney is the official company spokesperson, responsible for all facets of government affairs and corporate communications. Her primary responsibilities include strategic policy and position development, implementation, and execution.

She also manages Federal and State engagement to improve policies affecting Indian energy, taxation, resource development, government contracting, broadband development and access to capital.

Ms. Sweeney has served in leadership positions on numerous business and nonprofit boards at both the local and national level. She has served as chair of the Arctic Economic Council, co-chair of the Alaska Federation of Natives, a member of the Coast Guard Foundation Board of Trustees, and a member of the Cherokee Nation New Market Tax Credit Advisory Board.

There have been several letters of support for Ms. Sweeney's nomination and I have made them all part of the record.

I understand her tribal leaders are not able to join us today as they are busy in their whaling season, but they also send their support for Ms. Sweeney's nomination.

With that, I will turn to Vice Chairman Udall for his opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF HON. TOM UDALL,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW MEXICO**

Senator UDALL. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman Hoeven. We really appreciate your holding this nomination hearing today.

Congratulations to Ms. Sweeney on being nominated to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the Department of Interior. I understand you brought your family with you and probably the majority of Barrow, Alaska.

I also see you are accompanied by Catherine Stevens whose husband was a colleague of ours here in Washington for many, many years.

Thank you for the meeting in my office. You met with me and my Indian Affairs staff and I very much enjoyed that meeting.

This is an important nomination. The Department's Indian Affairs hallway has been empty for quite some time, lacking the top political leadership your nomination reflects and that Indian Country deserves.

I am encouraged that the President chose you, Ms. Sweeney, a Native American nominee with business experience and deep connection to your tribal community. I welcome the opportunity today to learn about your priorities as Assistant Secretary, if confirmed.

From my vantage point, the primary purpose of this hearing is to hear how you plan to carry out the department's mission to make sure the Secretary fulfills the United States trust responsibility to American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and villages and maintains the Federal-tribal government-to-government relationship.

The Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs has many critical responsibilities. In my own role as Vice Chairman of this Committee and as the elected representative of 23 tribes in my home State of New Mexico, I have used three guiding principles.

They are: respect tribal sovereignty, promote tribal self-determination and ensure that meaningful government-to-government consultation happens. I strongly believe that in word and deed, anyone confirmed to the position of Assistant Secretary must be guided by these same principles.

The Assistant Secretary must also have a strong partnership with this Committee and be an effective advocate and ambassador to all of Congress for Indian Country's priorities. In my questions today, I will seek to confirm that you are up to the challenge of meeting these responsibilities.

I also hope to get added assurances regarding your ethics agreement and your willingness to take on the issues that require balancing Indian Country's best interests with those of the Administration.

Thank you, Ms. Sweeney, for answering the call to serve. I look forward to your testimony today. I hope to work with my colleagues to move your nomination along in a timely manner.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Vice Chairman Udall.

I will turn to Senator Murkowski.

**STATEMENT OF HON. LISA MURKOWSKI,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM ALASKA**

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Vice Chairman Udall, for scheduling this hearing. I know there was a bit of a timing issue but I certainly appreciate it. I know the many, many Alaskans who have traveled to be here to be with Tara today appreciate that we were able to schedule for this afternoon.

I want to extend my congratulations and of course my full support to Tara Sweeney for the position for which she has been nominated as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the Department of Interior.

I have to tell you, sitting here, seeing you at the table with Senator Sullivan, seeing Catherine in the audience, seeing your family, and so many friends, I am bursting with pride. I feel this is graduation day, a birthday or a holiday.

You, Tara, hold so much hope and promise, not only for the people in your region, Alaska Natives around our State, but for Indian Country as a whole, a strong, strong female, Native leader ready to take charge. Believe me, we need someone to take charge within the BIA. You know that.

This position, as noted, is so important to advocate and ensure that Interior fulfills its Federal trust responsibility to the American Indian and the Native Alaska people and our Native Hawaiians.

This requires a deep understanding of tribal sovereignty and self-determination, the significance of the trust relationship and meaningful consultation, as well as the Federal Government's fiduciary responsibility to tribes.

You do understand all of these. You do because you have lived it but you have also led in this previously as the co-chair of the Alaska Federation of Natives. To my colleagues on the Committee, this is the largest State-wide Native organization in Alaska, representing over 300 Alaska Native tribes, corporations and tribal

consortia. It is basically one-fourth of all the federally-recognized tribes when you keep in mind what AFN is.

You were able, as co-chair, to knit together all the very diverse interests, the collaboration with tribes and local, State and Federal leaders to make meaningful and measurable impact on Native communities. In your efforts, I think you worked to be inclusive and transparent in bringing together the many differing opinions.

You have a sense of purpose, determination and an ability to work collaboratively to improve the common goal of bettering the lives of our Native people.

You demonstrated that at an even higher level with your role on the Arctic Economic Council. Again, that was a leadership position that Alaskans looked with awe at how you had assumed command in an international forum and venues with other nations to bring economic development and prosperity in regions that are challenged.

You bring a very unique skill set to this position, drawing from your background and your upbringing. I have seen you personally advocate for Alaska Native rights, cultural values and sustainable rural communities.

I say all that and it looks like part of a resume but I think we know the mark of an individual is often seen in their family and how they share their leadership as transmitted through the families surrounding them, those that support you and those you support.

You have demonstrated a love and care you see transmitted through your children in a beautiful way that we also celebrate. As much as your professional accomplishments, how you have brought beautiful young people into the world who are leaders in their own right, is greatly appreciated. What you and Kevin have built is a model and we share that.

Mr. Chairman, I am delighted to be able to be here to not only recognize the accomplishments of Tara Sweeney but to stand with her throughout this process. This is an important step by the Administration.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to make history by confirming the first Alaska Native person to this position. I am so pleased you are here.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Murkowski.

Senator Tester.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JON TESTER,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM MONTANA**

Senator TESTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Udall, for having this hearing.

Tara, welcome. We appreciate you putting yourself through this process. I understand, by Senator Sullivan's description, you have been at it a while already.

This is a very important position for our Native American people. It is a situation where we have suicide rates that are over the top, spousal abuse that is totally unacceptable, and poverty conditions that are third world status.



You are going to be overseeing a lot of this stuff, whether it is education, health care, land into trust, or making sure water compacts are pushed through. You are going to have an influence on that.

I did ask Senator Sullivan today about you, if you were tough. He said you were. We are going to need somebody who is tough. I am going to tell you why.

There have been a lot of good people who served in this position. They have come before this Committee and we have asked them for things in their budget, if it was adequate, and they always say yes.

However, I can tell you I have a couple tribal members from Montana in the crowd who talked to me this morning. Do you know what they talked to me about? They talked about law enforcement. They do not have anyone on the ground and BIA has not been able to help them.

I want you to fight for a budget that works for Indian Country so that when you come before this Committee or the Appropriations Committee, either one, you can say, this is what we need. If you want to carry out our trust obligation to Indian Country, this is what we need. If you do that, you are going to do a great job.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Heitkamp.

**STATEMENT OF HON. HEIDI HEITKAMP,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM NORTH DAKOTA**

Senator HEITKAMP. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have another commitment so I will not be able to be here. We had a lovely conversation.

I want to back up what Jon just said. You know we have trouble and you know we have not felt there was enough attention at BIA to these issues and not enough collaboration with law enforcement, HUD, or HHS. These are challenges. We are going to look to you to solve these problems or to at least give us a leg forward.

I think your background is excellent. I think there are some challenges people feel in terms of Alaska Natives but I think we are all in the same boat together. We want to make sure that you appreciate that there are a lot of folks in the Great Plains who have a different legal arrangement and different tribal and treaty arrangement.

I know you are up to the task of understanding and appreciating these differences but we are going to hold you accountable in a way that I do not think we have done in the past. We are here to help you. We are here to be an extension of that advocacy. We are here to help you be successful but we cannot help you be successful if you do not reach out.

I want you to know how grateful I am that you are using your enormous talents to tackle one of the biggest challenges there is in the Federal Government. That is providing services to some of the most forgotten people in America.

Thank you and thanks to the great State of Alaska for advancing a very capable and qualified candidate.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Sweeney, did you bring a Marine guard or is he here for the purpose of an introduction? I will now turn to

Senator Dan Sullivan also from Alaska for the purpose of introducing the nominee.

**STATEMENT OF HON. DAN SULLIVAN,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM ALASKA**

Senator SULLIVAN. It is both but I am here to introduce her.

Mr. Chairman and Vice Chairman Udall, thank you very much for the opportunity to say a few words on behalf of this very well-qualified nominee before you and dear friend of mine, Tara Sweeney, who as Senator Murkowski mentioned, is making history in many ways as the first Alaska Native to be nominated for this very important position.

I know that Tara's Iñupiat culture often values the collective success of their vast community over individual success, something I think all of us could learn from, nevertheless, I would like to spend a few minutes talking about Tara's individual characteristics that are so important for someone nominated to a position of public trust like this.

These are characteristics of integrity, intelligence, humility, and yes, to Senator Tester's question to me this morning on the Floor, certainly toughness, discipline and an absolute determination to work for her people, her State and her Country.

I have had the privilege of knowing Tara for a long time. Through her and my wife, Julie, I have also had the privilege of learning and knowing more and more about Tara's culture, her people, the great history of Alaska's Native people who make up almost one-fifth of the population of our great State.

Tara is a proud Iñupiat whose family is from Utqiagvik where right now, as you mentioned, Mr. Chairman, in her home village and villages across northwest Alaska, the citizens are in the throes of spring whaling season, an ancient tradition that feeds the body and soul of Native communities throughout the area.

Amazingly, today's Alaska Native whaling captains and crews still hunt using hand-held harpoons and going to the icy waters in hand-skin boats as their ancestors did for thousands of years. It is this kind of fidelity to Native culture that I think really defines Tara. It is in her heart and her soul.

It is also the ability to marry traditional cultures with the modern world, sometimes against long odds that is an enormously important part of Tara and a very important part of the wonderful and powerful narrative of her people.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to say a few words about the Alaska Federation of Natives, the largest Alaska Native organization in a State encompassing 229 federally-recognized tribes as well as 150 village corporations, 12 regional corporations and 12 regional non-profit and tribal consortia. It is certainly one of the most well respected organizations in all of Alaska.

The history of AFN, as we call it, formed half a century ago, is one of the great stories in a State full of great stories of Brave men and women from all across the State who fought for their land and self-determination and won.

This was not easy. They were demanding that the Federal Government recognize their rights to nearly 150 million acres of land at a time when Alaska Native villages were severely impoverished

and disease ran rampant. They enacted the largest land claims settlement Act in history, and continue to fight for their people, their culture and for all of us in Alaska and indeed, across the Country.

Tara grew up in this history and story. Her relatives were involved. Her village leaders played a decisive role. This is a crucial part of her legacy. When she became old enough and experienced enough, she ran for and was elected to be co-chair of AFN, a remarkable achievement that, in my view alone, qualifies her for this very important position.

During her time leading AFN, she spearheaded reforms to empower tribes, focused on issues like access to capital, self-determination, technology deployment and very critically, economic growth and good jobs in rural Alaska Native communities, some of the poorest communities in our Nation.

These are some of the critical issues she also focused on in her many other leadership positions in organizations such as Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, the National Conference of American Indians and as chair of the Arctic Economic Council.

This is the experience and focus she will bring to all indigenous people throughout our Country. I am absolutely certain there is no one who will work harder for the rights, for the economic empowerment and for the culture of America's first people than Tara Sweeney.

Finally, in conclusion, as we all know we are coming up on Mother's Day this Sunday. Tara's late mother, Eileen Mac Lean, was a legend. Like her mother before her, Tara's Akamai, she was a strong Alaska Native Leader who was respected throughout our State.

She was a teacher, the president of the Inuit Circumpolar Council and a well respected Alaska State legislator from District 40. Eileen's legacy lives on throughout our State. If confirmed, that legacy will live throughout our Nation through her very well-qualified daughter, Tara.

Tara, Alaska is very proud of you. We are all thrilled by your nomination. Quiana for being willing to serve our Country. I am confident that my Senate colleagues will respect and honor your achievement, experience, integrity and deep cultural commitments that make you an ideal nominee for this very important position.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Sullivan.

We will now swear in the witness.

Ms. Sweeney, please rise and raise your right hand. Do you solemnly affirm that the testimony you shall give today shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth under the penalty of perjury?

Ms. SWEENEY. I do.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Please be seated.

I want to remind you that your full written testimony will be made a part of the official record. I would say take five minutes or so but you can give or take. This is your chance to present as you wish.

I know you have family and friends here if you want to introduce some of them, feel free to do that.

Welcome.

**STATEMENT OF TARA MAC LEAN SWEENEY, NOMINEE TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY, INDIAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

Ms. SWEENEY. Thank you, Chairman Hoeven, Vice Chairman Udall and distinguished members of the Committee.

[Greeting in Native language.]

Ms. SWEENEY. My name is Tara Mac Lean Sweeney. I am from Utqiagvik and I am honored to be here today as you consider my nomination to be Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs at the Department of Interior.

I do have a number of family members here that would take up almost the entire hearing time if I introduced everyone. I would like to recognize a few of those members here today.

You have a room full of Iñupiaq Eskimos, so I appreciate the staff keeping this room nice and cool because it is very warm for the rest of us. I can tell you this Eskimo is melting.

Left to right, I would like to acknowledge Oliver Leavitt, my mentor. I explained earlier when I was 12 years old attending elementary school, shortly after the land claims had passed and was enacted and Alaskans were familiarizing themselves with the land claims and what a corporate structure would look like in our region, Oliver came into our classroom to talk to us about the opportunities ANCSA could bring and the potential for students like myself to realize by going to work for my Alaska Native corporation.

As he left the building, I looked over to my friends, including his son, and said I want to work there. I want to work for him. I want to do what he is doing for our people. From that time, I worked very hard under his tutelage to get to where I am today.

I would be remiss without acknowledging his importance in my life and to our region and community. Oliver Leavitt is sitting here at the edge of the row.

Next to him is my cousin, Richard Glenn. We have worked this journey on a professional level together. Richard Glenn, many of you may know for his involvement in the work with Arctic Slope Regional Corporation.

We have spent so much time together working on issues important to Alaska and our region. I could not be sitting here in front of you without him walking with me and me walking with him in our professional journey.

Next to Richard is my stepfather, George Weckerle. I say he is from Barrow. He currently lives in upstate New York but I am certainly glad that he was able to make the drive to be with us today.

Next to George is my son, Ahmaogak Sweeney, who is 18 and a senior at South Anchorage High School. Thank you for holding the hearing this early in May because next week is graduation and he will be graduating, so I am excited. He is also a pilot and will be pursuing aviation as a career.

Next to Ahmaogak is my daughter Caitlin, a junior at Cornell in the business school there. She recently returned to the United States from overseas abroad for the semester in Rome. She arrived yesterday. I am extremely excited she has been able to join us.

Finally is my husband, Kevin, my life partner, the love of my life and one of my biggest supporters. We have been married for over 20 years. I am very thankful for the support my family has given to me throughout this process.

If you know Native families, you know that aunties play a major role in your lives so I would be remiss if I did not say hello online to my aunt, Kannik Glenn and Marilyn Gamboa.

[Greeting in Native language.]

Thank you.

I am an Iñupiaq Eskimo from Alaska's North Slope, raised in the era following congressional enactment of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. As this Committee is aware, ANCSA was essentially an experiment by our Federal Government on how best to address the needs of Alaska Native people that pre-existed the United States Constitution.

ANCSA eliminated the seven reservations in Alaska at the time, one of which was located in my hometown of Utqiagvik, and replaced them with a historic land claims settlement that deeded 12 percent of Alaska's lands in fee simple title to be held by Native corporations.

As you know, the more than 200 Alaska Native Corporations created by Congress exist side by side but are autonomous from the more than 200 federally-recognized tribal governments in Alaska.

I was raised in rural Alaska, educated at Cornell University, mentored and employed during this post-ANCSA era. I have witnessed our village leadership focus their efforts on the corporate structures Congress created, while trying to balance the sovereignty and the role of our tribal organizations for the well-being of the Iñupiaq people.

As Alaska Natives, like our American Indian counterparts, we are reaching for the same future, with very similar tools, tribal governments to govern our respective social needs and traditional and cultural ways, and tribal corporations, to engage in the economic opportunities of our great Country.

This reality has meant, and still means, that the Department of the Interior is very much a part of our past, our lives today, and will be in the future of the generations yet unborn. The DOI is a reality with which every Native American lives. I am honored to leave my homeland for a short time to engage in public service, but perhaps most important, to support tribal nations, tribal corporations and our tribal people across the Country.

The mission of Indian Affairs at DOI is "to engage in a robust government-to-government relationship with federally-recognized Indian Nations and to collaborate with Indian organizations and corporations to support socially, culturally and economically self-sufficient Indian peoples."

Members of the Committee, this mission statement is one that both Secretary Zinke and I believe in. With the Administration's support, I would like to bring the vast talent of Native leaders around the Country to help move our collective tribal and corporate interests forward.

I am both a product and a witness to the work of Native leaders to address the challenges that each of our communities face, including social services to protect our most vulnerable, the perpetuation

of our languages and cultural practices, investments in education, housing and other infrastructure, and capacity building to develop economic opportunities at home and across the Country.

My life experiences throughout rural Alaska positioned me to watch our community leaders overhaul the Bureau of Indian Affairs school in my village. Previously, this school had only served my mother's generation through the 8th grade.

Native leadership led the conversion of the school to a pre-K through 12th grade school system with a local school board. This act of courage and partnership with the DOI changed the trajectory of every generation that followed. Students no longer had to leave home 10 months of every year to achieve a high school diploma. I am a product of this change.

Today, we have a locally-governed school district, and we also successfully operate the only accredited tribal college in Alaska, providing degrees in higher education and vocational skills to our young adults.

The Arctic is the most remote region in the United States. No roads connect our communities, the cost of living is extremely high, our people face significant social challenges and our region is plagued with insufficient sanitation facilities. Unfortunately, this is akin to the realities faced throughout the rest of Indian Country.

To address these needs, our people have been proactive in accessing the resources of bond markets, local taxing authority, and business investments. The work is far from done. We continue to push forward.

I will utilize that same solutions-oriented perspective to serve all of Indian Country. I understand that the collective knowledge of our tribal leaders must be my top priority to serve the mission of Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior.

With that in mind, if confirmed, I plan to spend my first 180 days listening to tribal leaders and the congressional committees of jurisdiction to hear the top priorities and establish a clear and comprehensive action plan.

As a Native impacted by DOI, I understand that one appointment, my appointment, is not a universal remedy. However, for improved and effective service delivery, Indian Country needs a clear framework from the department, grounded in tribal consultation.

This engagement will give my tenure as Assistant Secretary the clear vision that is needed to advance the priorities of Interior and our tribal nations. I expect these consultations will produce a myriad of priorities.

Across this great Country, from the southwest to the northeast, one cannot paint Indian Country with a single stroke. Indian Country is not a homogenous community. There are some stark and subtle differences that make each tribe unique.

I have great familiarity with energy development, education, housing, telecommunications, and business development issues, particularly within the context of rural and geographical isolation.

However, others will be new to me. As I have been taught by my elders when taking on new ventures, in order to achieve success I must be guided by the principles focused on humility to hear, to be taught, to contemplate and to act.

In closing, during any tenure this body may grant me, I fully intend to make decisions in consultation, and to act on the best ideas that move Indian Affairs and the decision making of tribes forward, not backwards.

Should I be confirmed, your guidance and expertise will be both expected and appreciated. Quyanaqpak. Thank you for the opportunity to come before this Committee today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement and biographical information of Ms. Sweeney follow:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF TARA MAC LEAN SWEENEY, NOMINEE TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY, INDIAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Chairman Hoeven, Vice Chairman Udall, and distinguished members of the Committee. My name is Tara Sweeney, and I am honored to be here today as you consider my nomination to be Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior.

I am an Iñupiaq Eskimo from Alaska's North Slope, raised in the era following congressional enactment of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (ANCSA). As this Committee is aware, ANCSA was essentially an experiment by our Federal Government, to address the age old question of how best to address the needs of America's Native people that pre-existed the United States Constitution. ANCSA eliminated the 7 reservations in Alaska at the time, one of which was located in my hometown of Utqiagvik, and replaced them with a historic land claims settlement that deeded 12 percent of Alaska's lands in fee simple title to be held by Native corporations. As you know, the more than 200 Alaska Native Corporations created by Congress exist side by side but are autonomous from the more than 200 federally recognized tribal governments in Alaska.

I was raised in rural Alaska, educated at Cornell University, mentored and employed during this post-ANCSA era. I have witnessed our village leadership, including my own mother and others, focus their efforts on the corporate structures Congress created, while trying to balance the sovereignty and the role of our tribal organizations for the well-being of the Iñupiaq people.

As Alaska Natives, like our American Indian counterparts, we are reaching for the same future, with very similar tools—tribal governments to govern our respective social needs and traditional and cultural ways, and tribal corporations, to engage in the economic opportunities of our great country.

This reality has meant, and still means, that the Department of the Interior is very much a part of our past, our lives today, and will be in the future of the generations yet born. The DOI is a reality with which every Native American lives. I am honored to leave my homeland for a short time to engage in public service, but perhaps most important, to support tribal nations, tribal corporations, and our tribal people all across the country.

The mission of Indian Affairs at DOI is "to engage in a robust government-to-government relationship with federally recognized Indian Nations and to collaborate with Indian organizations and corporations to support socially, culturally and economically self-sufficient Indian peoples".

Members of the Committee, this mission statement is one that both Secretary Zinke and I believe in. With the administration's support, I would like to bring the vast talent of Native leaders around the country to help move our collective tribal and corporate interests forward.

I am both a product and a witness to the work of Native leaders to address the challenges that each of our communities face—including social services to protect our most vulnerable, the perpetuation of our languages and cultural practices, investments in education, housing and other infrastructure, and capacity building to develop economic opportunities at home and across the country.

My life experiences throughout rural Alaska positioned me to watch our community leaders overhaul the Bureau of Indian Affairs school in my village. Previously, this school had only served my mother's generation through the 8th grade. Native leadership led the conversion of the school to a pre-K through 12th grade school system with a local school board. This act of courage and partnership with the DOI changed the trajectory of every generation that followed. Students no longer had to leave home 10 months of every year to achieve a high school diploma. Today, we have a locally governed school district, and we also successfully operate the only ac-

credited tribal college in Alaska, providing degrees in higher education and vocational skills to our young adults.

The Arctic is the most remote region in the United States. No roads connect our communities, the cost of living is extremely high, our people face significant social challenges and our region is plagued with insufficient sanitation facilities. Unfortunately, this is akin to the realities faced throughout the rest of Indian Country. To address these needs, we accessed the resources of bond markets, local taxing authority, and business investments to build a city water and sewer system, a system that most Americans take for granted. The work is far from done but we continue to push solutions forward. I will utilize that same solutions-oriented perspective to serve all of Indian Country.

My expertise is in business, government relations, and policy development that facilitates good business practices. However, business is but one facet of the well-being of Native peoples. It is one tool that is intricately connected to our social and cultural well-being. I know that the collective knowledge of our tribal leaders must be my top priority to serve the mission of Indian Affairs and Tribal Nations.

With that in mind, if confirmed, I plan to spend my first 180 days listening to tribal leaders and the Congressional Committees of jurisdiction to hear the top priorities and establish a clear and comprehensive Action Plan.

As a Native impacted by DOI, I understand that one appointment, my appointment, is not a universal remedy. However, for improved and effective service delivery, Indian Country needs a clear framework from the Department, grounded in tribal consultation. This engagement will give my tenure as Assistant Secretary the clear vision that is needed to advance the priorities of Interior and our tribal nations.

I expect these consultations will produce a myriad of priorities. Across this great country, from the southwest to the northeast, one cannot paint Indian country with a single stroke. Indian country is not a homogenous community. There are some stark and subtle differences that make each tribe unique. I have great familiarity with energy development, education, housing, telecommunications, and business development issues, particularly within the context of rural and geographical isolation; however, others will be new to me. As I have been taught by my elders when taking on new ventures, in order to achieve success I must be guided by the principles focused on a humility to hear, to be taught, to contemplate and to act.

In closing, during any tenure this body may grant me, I fully intend to make decisions in consultation, and to act on the best ideas that moves Indian Affairs and the decision making of tribes forward, not backwards. Should I be confirmed, your guidance and expertise will be both expected and appreciated.

Quyanaqpak. Thank you for the opportunity to come before this Committee. I am happy to answer any questions you may have for me today.



**A. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

**1. Name:** (include any former names or nicknames used.)

*Tara Mae Lean Swensen (married name); Tara Kanih Kimberly Pagnolak Mae Lean (maiden)*

**2. Position to which nominated:**

*Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior*

**3. Date of nomination:**

*October 24, 2017*

**4. Address:** (List current place of residence and office addresses.)

**Information not released to the public.**

**5. Date and place of birth:**

**Information not released to the public.**

**6. Marital status:** (include maiden name of wife or husband's name.)

*Married; Kevin Carey Swensen*

**7. Names and ages of children:** (include stepchildren and children from previous marriages.)

*Caillin (21 years old); Ahmzagak (18 years old)*

**8. Education:** (List secondary and higher education institutions, dates attended, degree received, and date degree granted.)

*Cornell University, School of Industrial and Labor Relations 1991-1996; B.S. in Industrial and Labor Relations granted in 1996*

9. **Employment record:** (List all jobs held since college, including the title or description of job, name of employer, location of work, and dates of employment, including any military service.)

**ARCTIC SLOPE REGIONAL CORPORATION** 01/1996-Present

- *Executive Vice President* 01/2011-Present  
*Anchorage, AK*
- *Senior Vice President of External Affairs* 12/2010-01/2011  
*Anchorage, AK*
- *Vice President of Government Affairs* 03/2008-12/2010  
*Anchorage, AK*
- *Director, Government Affairs* 02/2005-03/2008  
*Washington, D.C./Anchorage, AK*

**BREAK IN SERVICE FROM ASRC BETWEEN 2003-2003**

- *Government Affairs Officer* 03/2002-01/2003  
*ASRC Subsidiary, Houston Contracting Company-Alaska LLC*  
*Anchorage, AK*
- *Manager of Shareholder & Government Relations* 02/2001-05/2002  
*Anchorage, AK*
- *Shareholder Relations Administrator* 12/1999-02/2001  
*Anchorage, AK*
- *Labor Relations Manager* 10/1997-12/1999  
*ASRC Subsidiary, Houston Contracting Company-Alaska, LLC*  
*Anchorage, AK*
- *Special Assistant to the President & 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President* 01/1996-10/1997  
*Barrow, AK*

**SAVVY CONSULTING** 08/2003-03/2004

- *Owner*  
*Barrow, AK*

**STATE OF ALASKA** 01/2003-09/2003

- *Rural Affairs Advisor/Special Assistant on Education*  
*Office of the Governor*  
*Juneau, AK*

**NORTH SLOPE BOROUGH**

06/1993-08/1995

- *Government Affairs Intern*  
*VanNess Feldman Law Firm*  
*Washington, D.C.*

10. **Government experience:** (List any advisory, consultative, honorary or other part-time service or positions with Federal, State, or local governments, other than those listed above.)

*Outside of my work with the State of Alaska, the only other government-associated experience includes the FCC Advisory Committee on Diversity for Communications in a Digital Age (expired); I also served as a consultant for the North Slope Borough and North Slope Borough School District on healthy communities, education, and economic development.*

11. **Business relationships:** (List all positions held as an officer, director, trustee, partner, proprietor, agent, representative, or consultant of any corporation, company, firm, partnership, or other business enterprise, educational or other institution.)

- *Arctic Economic Council, Former International Chair; Executive Committee, Vice Chair*
- *Ted Stevens Foundation, Trustee*
- *Alaska Federation of Natives, Board Member; Legislative Committee Member; Leadership Committee, Chair; Co-Chair*
- *Ukpeagvik Inupiat Corporation, Former Board Member*
- *Cherokee Nation New Market Tax Credit Advisory Board (CNB Economic Development Company, LLC, beneficiary)*
- *Breast Cancer Focus, Inc., Former Board Member*
- *Coast Guard Foundation Board of Trustees, Former Trustee*
- *University of Alaska Foundation Board of Trustees, Former Trustee*
- *Koahmic Broadcast Corporation, Former Board Member*
- *Analytical Services, Inc., Former Board Member*
- *Arctic Power, Former Board Member*

12. **Memberships:** (List all memberships and offices held in professional, fraternal, scholarly, civic, business, charitable and other organizations.)

- *Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC), Shareholder*
- *Ukpeagvik Inupiat Corporation, Shareholder*
- *Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope, Tribal Member*

- *Native Village of Barrow, Tribal Member*
- *National Congress of American Indians, Lifetime Member*
- *Kanai River Spawning Association, Lifetime Member*
- *Pi Beta Phi, New York Delta, Cornell University*
- *National Rifle Association, Former Member*

**13. Political affiliations and activities:**

(a) List all offices with a political party that you have held or any public office for which you have been a candidate.

*2004 candidate for Alaska State Senate District 7, Non-Partisan*

(b) List all memberships, offices held in, and services rendered to all political parties or election committees during the last 10 years.

*2014 Sullivan for U.S. Senate, Campaign Co-Chair, Midnight Sun Republican Woman*

(c) Itemize all political contributions to any individual, campaign organization, political party, political action committee, or similar entity of \$400 or more for the past 10 years.

**Federal**

<i>Stevens, Theodore F (Ted) Via Stevens for Senate Committee</i>	<i>02/29/2008</i>	<i>\$ 500.00</i>
<i>Tiita, Mary Kim Via Mary Kim Tiita for Congress</i>	<i>04/01/2008</i>	<i>\$ 300.00</i>
<i>Inouye, Daniel K Via Dan Inouye for U.S. Senate</i>	<i>08/25/2008</i>	<i>\$ 300.00</i>
<i>Young, Donald E Via Alaskans for Don Young</i>	<i>10/15/2008</i>	<i>\$ 500.00</i>
<i>Stevens, Theodore F (Ted) Via Stevens for Senate Committee</i>	<i>11/03/2008</i>	<i>\$ 900.00</i>
<i>Murkowski, Lisa Via Lisa Murkowski for U.S. Senate</i>	<i>04/14/2009</i>	<i>\$ 500.00</i>
<i>Inouye, Daniel K Via Dan Inouye for U.S. Senate</i>	<i>05/03/2009</i>	<i>\$ 1,000.00</i>
<i>Young, Donald E Via Alaskans for Don Young</i>	<i>10/27/2009</i>	<i>\$ 500.00</i>
<i>Murkowski, Lisa Via Lisa Murkowski for U.S. Senate</i>	<i>03/05/2010</i>	<i>\$ 1,000.00</i>
<i>Murkowski, Lisa Via Lisa Murkowski for U.S. Senate</i>	<i>07/25/2010</i>	<i>\$ 900.00</i>
<i>Benn Leadership PAC</i>	<i>03/23/2011</i>	<i>\$ 1,200.00</i>
<i>Midnight Sun Political Action Committee</i>	<i>06/09/2011</i>	<i>\$ 1,000.00</i>
<i>Hastings, Doc Via Friends of Doc Hastings</i>	<i>09/07/2011</i>	<i>\$ 500.00</i>

Murkowski, Lisa Via Lisa Murkowski for U.S. Senate	10/25/2011	\$ 1,000.00
Murkowski, Lisa Via Lisa Murkowski for U.S. Senate	08/13/2012	\$ 500.00
Alaska Louisiana Victory Fund	02/13/2012	\$ 1,000.00
Landrieu, Mary Via Friends of Mary Landrieu, Inc.	09/13/2012	\$ 500.00
Begich, Mark Via Alaskans for Begich 2014	09/13/2012	\$ 500.00
Midnight Sun Political Action Committee	08/17/2012	\$ 500.00
Arctic Slope Regional Corporation Political Action Committee (ASRC PAC)	08/27/2012	\$ 500.00
Murkowski, Lisa Via Lisa Murkowski for U.S. Senate	03/01/2013	\$ 500.00
Arctic Slope Regional Corporation Political Action Committee (ASRC PAC)	06/19/2013	\$ 576.90
Munas, Devin G Via Devin Munas Campaign Committee	07/19/2013	\$ 500.00
Hastings, Doc Via Friends of Doc Hastings	11/05/2013	\$ 500.00
Sullivan, Dan Via Sullivan for U.S. Senate	12/12/2013	\$ 500.00
Murkowski, Lisa Via Lisa Murkowski for U.S. Senate	02/28/2014	\$ 600.00
Arctic Slope Regional Corporation Political Action Committee (ASRC PAC)	03/28/2014	\$ 961.50
Sullivan, Dan Via Sullivan for U.S. Senate	05/21/2014	\$ 1,500.00
Arctic Slope Regional Corporation Political Action Committee (ASRC PAC)	06/30/2014	\$ 1,346.10
Sullivan, Dan Via Sullivan for U.S. Senate	09/21/2014	\$ 600.00
Sullivan, Dan Via Sullivan for U.S. Senate	09/21/2014	\$ 2,400.00
Arctic Slope Regional Corporation Political Action Committee (ASRC PAC)	12/30/2014	\$ 1,153.80
Murkowski, Lisa Via Lisa Murkowski for U.S. Senate	06/30/2015	\$ 1,400.00
Arctic Slope Regional Corporation Political Action Committee (ASRC PAC)	06/30/2015	\$ 2,499.90
Arctic Slope Regional Corporation Political Action Committee (ASRC PAC)	06/30/2016	\$ 1,346.10
Young, Donald E Via Alaskans for Dan Young	07/05/2016	\$ 1,000.00
Young, Donald E Via Alaskans for Dan Young	08/01/2016	\$ 700.00

Young, Donald E Via Alaskans for Don Young	09/02/2016	\$ 800.00
Arctic Slope Regional Corporation Political Action Committee (ASRC PAC)	09/30/2016	\$ 1,348.10
Arctic Slope Regional Corporation Political Action Committee (ASRC PAC)	12/31/2016	\$ 769.26
Young, Donald E Via Alaskans for Don Young	02/24/2017	\$ 1,000.00
Young, Donald E Via Alaskans for Don Young	02/11/2017	\$ 1000.00
Sullivan, Dan Via Alaskans for Dan Sullivan	08/23/2017	\$ 500.00

## State

Neal W. Foster	12/30/2009	\$ 500.00
Tora Svendsen	11/07/2003	\$ 1,000.00
RSA - ANCHORAGE REPUBLICAN WOMEN'S CLUB	05/08/2009	\$ 900.00
Mike Hawker	07/13/2011	\$ 500.00
Mike Hawker	07/13/2011	\$ 500.00
Anna I Fairclough	03/13/2014	\$ 500.00
Anna I. Fairclough	10/30/2012	\$ 500.00
Benjamin Pitigluk Nagalak "Benmie"	08/10/2016	\$ 500.00
Benjamin Pitigluk Nagalak "Benmie"	11/28/2016	\$ 500.00
Benjamin Pitigluk Nagalak "Benmie"	02/15/2017	\$ 500.00
Jennifer B. Johnston	09/22/2016	\$ 500.00
Mike Hawker	03/14/2012	\$ 500.00
Sean Parnell	03/02/2014	\$ 500.00
Sean Parnell and Dan Sullivan	10/06/2012	\$ 500.00
Walker Mallast for Alaska	02/17/2015	\$ 500.00

14. **Honors and awards:** (List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, honorary society memberships, military medals and any other special recognitions for outstanding service or achievements.)

- Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, ATHENA Society, Class of 2017
- Northwest Regional Emmy® Awards, Commercial Campaign, IAM DC/PIAQ 2014
- Kenai Women's Classic Winner, Kenai River, Alaska 2012
- Alaska Journal of Commerce, Top 40 Under 40 awardee, 2008
- Blue Ribbon Winner, Leg Wrestling Competition, Kotzebue, Alaska July 4, 2004
- National Congress of American Indians, Miss NCAI 1993
- World Eskimo Indian Olympics, Miss WEIFO 1993
- Qivikitchigit, City of Barrow, Miss Top of the World 1993

15. **Published writings:** (List the titles, publishers, and dates of books, articles, reports, editorials or other published materials, which you have written.) Supply two copies of all published material to the Committee.

*I have included as attachment 1 writings that I have retained or have access to, including the following:*

- Sweeney, Tara and Vaurasta, Teri, "Arctic Economic Council: Creating Parameters for Sustainable Economic Development in the Arctic" Arctic Yearbook, Arctic Economic Council, 2016
- Sweeney, Tara. "The Arctic Economic Council: Connecting with the Business Community." *UArctic Shared Voices*, 24 January 2016
- Sweeney, Tara. "What they are saying." *Arctic Energy Center*, 4 April 2016
- Sweeney, Tara. "Making the connection: Why the Arctic needs broadband access." *Alaska Dispatch News*, July 2016
- Sweeney, Tara. "Broadband connection becoming a possibility." *Arctic Sounder*, 8 July 2016
- Sweeney, Tara. "Report off-base. SB 77 would not limit shareholder access to Native corp. financials." *Alaska Dispatch News*, 29 June 2016
- Sweeney, Tara. "Making the Connection." *Uqalagnayich*, 7 August 2016. Text available online at: <http://www.uqalagnayich.com/2016/08/07/making-the-connection/>
- Sweeney, Tara. "Journalist makes false assumption about SB 77." *Arctic Sounder*, 17 April 2015
- Sweeney, Tara. "Explore Alaska: Alaska Locals' Tour," *TravelAlaska.com*, 2015 (approx.)
- Sweeney, Tara. "Media fail to see achievements in Native communities." *Anchorage Daily News*, 5 March 2014 (copy unavailable).
- Sweeney, Tara. "AFN Chronicles a Busy Year." *Arctic Sounder, Bristol Bay Times & Dutch Harbor Fisherman*, 6 June 2014 (copy unavailable).
- Sweeney, Tara. "Oil tax reform, a big step in the right direction." *Arctic Sounder*, 19 April 2013
- Sweeney, Tara. "My Turn: It's our oil, it's also our future." *Jensen Empire*, 31 October 2012
- Sweeney, Tara. "Why Alaska needs oil tax reform: It's our oil, and it's our future." *Alaska Dispatch News*, 3 November 2012
- Sweeney, Tara. "Habitat designation threatens rural life." *Anchorage Daily News*, 23

January 2011

- Sweeney, Tara. "Pragmatism, common ground for energy independence." *Indian Country Today*, 15 October 2008
- Sweeney, Tara. "The Wisdom of Arctic Oil- The Luxury of Running Water." *Norwest.com*, 23 December 2005 (copy unavailable).
- Sweeney, Tara. "Bipartisan Views Ignored in ANWR Debate." *Anchorage Daily News: Voice of the Times*, February 2002 (copy unavailable).

16. **Speeches:** Provide the Committee with two copies, and any transcript of recording, if available, of any formal speeches you have delivered during the last 5 years on topics relevant to the position for which you have been nominated. Formal speeches include, but not limited to widely attended public addresses, commencement speeches, and conference lectures. Please include the date, place and organization where they were delivered.

*I have included copies of prepared testimony (attachment 2) and speeches (attachment 3) of which I have retained copies, and have included links to hearings and presentations, including to several of which I do not have written statements available:*

#### Testimony

- ASRC Comments on HJR 7 Supporting opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska State Legislature, House Resources Committee, Co-Chairmen Feige and Sattler, February 2013. Link to hearing: <http://www.legis.state.ak.us/house/MeetingDetail?MeetingID=2013013-02-27%20HJ07>
- ASRC Comments on CSSB 21 HRES Version K on Interest Rate for Fees, Taxes and Payments, Alaska State Legislature, House Finance Committee, April 9, 2013. Link to hearing: <http://www.legis.state.ak.us/house/SingleMeetingSession?MeetingID=20130409&committee=01204&time=1336&date=20130409&committee=FIN%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20&house=H>
- ASRC, CIRI, Doyon Comments on the Roundtable on Energy Development in Indian Country, U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, Chairman Cantwell, June 2013.
- ASRC Comments on Alaska's Bypass Mail System, U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee of Federal Workforce, U.S. Postal Service and Census, Chairman Farenthold, March 2014.
- Alaska Federation of Natives Comments on Alaska Native Subsistence Co-Management Demonstration Act of 2014, U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Indian and Alaska Native Affairs, Chairman D.Young, March 2014. Link to hearing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1h5tAtY8y0k>
- ASRC, Petrostar Inc. Comments on H.B. 286, Alaska State Legislature House Finance Committee, Co-Chairmen Stoltze and Austerman, April 2014.

#### Presentations

- Fletcher Arctic VI Conference Panel: Leadership in the North, February 18, 2017.



- Arctic Frontiers, Arctic Business Opportunities and Responsible Development in the Arctic, January 24, 2017.
- Kick off Norwegian Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers, January 23, 2017.
- SXSW Conference, Panel Discussion on "Can you hear me now? The rural broadband debate.", March 2017
- Arctic Economic Council, The Way Forward, Arctic Circle 2016. No text; link to video at: <https://vimeo.com/189538398>
- Arctic Economic Council Breakout Session: Arctic Economic and Business Development, October 7, 2016. Link at: <https://youtu.be/zHjDhKjU5s>
- Arctic Economic Council Plenary, Foundation and Structure of the AEC, October 9, 2016.
- Mañae - Arctic Forum, Arctic Economic Council Overview, October 3, 2016.
- Arctic Science Ministerial Event, Building a Bridge between Arctic Research/Academia and Business through Technology, September 29, 2016.
- Arctic Science Ministerial Event, Panel: Empowering Arctic Communities through Research and Education, September 27, 2016.
- Wilson Center, Arctic Economic Development Forum, Panel Discussion. No text; link to video at: <https://youtu.be/YZU1FmJgILg?list=PLzMIiQhVrdHMuXqDNEfzCO6LdSufxpA>
- Arctic Economic Council, Arctic Frontiers - 2016, Tromsø, Norway, January 25, 2016.
- Arctic Encounter Symposium, Seattle 2016, Plenary Session Address, January 15, 2016.
- Arctic Economic Council, Keynote Address: In the Spirit of the Rovaniemi Process, November 25, 2015.
- Arctic Economic Council, Arctic Circle 2015, No text; link to video at <https://vimeo.com/143394151>
- Arctic Economic Council, Remarks: Opening of the Office of the Secretariat, September 8, 2015.
- Remarks from the Arctic People's Conference, Copenhagen, Denmark, November 22, 2013.
- Arctic Economic Council, Comments to the International Polar Foundation, November 2013.
- Mandan-Hidatsa-Arikara Nation Energy Summit, May 2015.
- Talking Points for Arendalsøka 2016 on Alaska-Norway economic opportunities. Link: [https://youtu.be/1\\_zX0NmOrWs](https://youtu.be/1_zX0NmOrWs)

#### 17. Selection:

- (a) Do you know why you were selected for the position to which you have been nominated by the President?

*I am being nominated for my deep commitment to improving the quality of life for American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. I believe that the status quo within Indian Country is unacceptable, and I have spent much of my life working to improve conditions in Indian Country. Indian Country has some of the most economically depressed and socially challenged communities in our country, and it is my view that Indian Affairs within the Department of the Interior can serve as a catalyst for economic growth in these communities. There is strong alignment in the views of the President, the Secretary, and me on creating efficiencies within Indian Affairs, improving the quality of services to Indian Country, and fostering better relationships with the private sector aimed at initiating economic growth.*

- (b) What in your background or employment experience do you believe affirmatively qualifies you for

**this particular appointment?**

*I was raised in rural Alaska, where living conditions are some of the most remote in the nation. The cost of living is exorbitant, which challenges the quality of life, health, and education services; no roads connect our communities; and the climate can be life-threatening for much of the year. Schooled in rural Native villages under the BIA paraprofessional, I am the daughter of two educators, themselves students in the BIA system. My personal experiences have translated to a resilient personality and informed leadership.*

*My education and experiences at Cornell University were very enriching. From my involvement in the American Indian Program there to being in the inaugural class of residents at Akwe:kon, the first university residence in the country purposely built to celebrate American Indian heritage, I developed a deep appreciation for the similarities and differences among Alaska Natives and American Indians. It was during this time that I realized that I wanted to be part of the solution to the work needed to be done for Indian Country. After graduation I chose to return home to get to work, instead of pursuing a professional degree.*

*Since that time, my professional career has focused on promoting self-determination and improving the quality of life in rural Alaska and Native communities around the country. In particular, I have been an advocate for economic and economic self-determination in many diverse Native communities, including assisting the Council of Native Hawaiian Advancement in learning from the Alaska Native experience, to working with tribes in energy infrastructure development or with experts on developing culturally relevant curriculum.*

*My work has made me comfortable leading large organizations and managing multiple projects and staff, and it has focused me to be a results-oriented manager. I have experience in the workings of Washington, D.C., and gained valuable skills in international diplomatic relations during my time as the international chair of the Arctic Economic Council.*

**B. FUTURE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIPS**

1. Will you sever all connections with your present employers, business firms, business associations, or business organizations if you are confirmed by the Senate?

*Yes, if confirmed I will resign from my position with Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC). I will continue to be an Alaska Native shareholder in ASRC.*

2. Do you have any plans, commitments, or agreements to pursue outside employment, with or without compensation, during your service with the government? If so, please explain.

*No*

3. Do you have any plans, commitments, or agreements after completing government service to resume employment, affiliation, or practice with your previous employer, business firm, association, or organization?

*No*

4. Has anybody made a commitment to employ your services in any capacity after you leave government service?

*No*

5. If confirmed, do you expect to serve out your full term or until the next Presidential election, whichever is applicable?

*Yes*

**C. POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

1. Describe all financial arrangements, deferred compensation agreements, and other continuing dealings with business associates, clients, or customers.
- *ASRC Deferred Compensation Plan. I will continue to participate in the ASRC Deferred Compensation Plan. The plan sponsor will not make contributions on my behalf to the plan after my separation, and the funds remaining in the plan will be paid out over a five-year period beginning on the date of separation.*
  - *ASRC Shareholder Dividend. I am a shareholder of ASRC. My employment relationship with ASRC is independent of my shareholder status with the corporation. Pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (ANCSA), Alaska Native corporations (ANC) are responsible for providing economic benefits, among others, to their shareholders. ASRC is the Alaska Native regional corporation representing the business interests of its approximately 13,000 Inupiat Eskimo shareholders in a region spanning approximately 55 million acres from the western community of Point Hope to the community of Kaktovik, adjacent to the Canadian border.*  
  
*This stock cannot be bought, sold or traded like publicly traded stock, consistent with the articles of incorporation of the corporation. ASRC dividends are distributed on either a quarterly or annual basis, pursuant to the dividend distribution policy or formula of the corporation.*
  - *Ukiagvik Inupiat Corporation (UIC) Dividend. I am a shareholder of UIC, also an Alaska Native corporation, but unlike ASRC. UIC is a village corporation representing the business interests of the shareholders from the community of Ukiagvik (Barrow). ANCSA established both regional (like ASRC) and village (like UIC) corporations. Village corporations may distribute a dividend, depending on profitability and the village corporation's dividend distribution policy or formula. In March 2018 I initiated the process to divest these shares by transferring them to my non-minor, dependent children.*
  - *State of Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend. The State of Alaska has a dividend distribution program for State residents from investment earnings of mineral royalties. Eligibility for the dividend is determined by residency during the calendar year preceding the year the dividend is applied for. I will qualify for the 2017 dividend, for which application will take place January-March, 2018, and distribution in October 2018. After this period, if confirmed and given the residency requirements for the distribution, I will not likely qualify for future distributions for the remainder of my service.*
2. Indicate any investments, obligations, liabilities, or other relationships which could involve potential conflicts of interest in the position to which you have been nominated.
- I have consulted, and will continue to consult, with the Office of Government Ethics and the Department's*

*Designated Agency Ethics Official to identify potential conflicts of interest. I have entered into an ethics agreement with the Department's Designated Agency Ethics Official and will comply with that agreement. I am not aware of any other conflicts of interest.*

3. Describe any business relationship, dealing, or financial transaction that you have had during the last 16 years, whether for yourself, on behalf of a client, or acting as an agent, that could in any way constitute or result in a possible conflict of interest in the position to which you have been nominated.

*Please see the response to paragraph 1 of this section. I have consulted, and will continue to consult, with the Office of Government Ethics and the Department's Designated Agency Ethics Official to identify potential conflicts of interest. I have entered into an ethics agreement with the Department's Designated Agency Ethics Official and will comply with that agreement. I am not aware of any other conflicts of interest.*

4. Describe any activity during the past 10 years in which you have engaged for the purpose of directly or indirectly influencing the passage, defeat, or modification of any legislation or affecting the administration and execution of law or public policy, regardless if you were a registered lobbyist.

*In my position as Executive Vice President of External Affairs with the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC), I am required to identify issues that might impact how ASRC carries out its statutory functions, develop strategies to address those issues, and execute that strategy. Activities that I have engaged in include education and outreach to the public and to elected lawmakers; presenting testimony before legislative bodies; and developing comments and analysis on many issues of importance to ASRC and to Alaska Native people, in general.*

5. Explain how you will resolve any potential conflict of interest, including any that may be disclosed by your responses to the above items. (Please provide a copy of any trust or other agreements.)

*I have consulted, and will continue to consult, with the Office of Government Ethics and the Department's Designated Agency Ethics Official to identify potential conflicts of interest. I have entered into an ethics agreement with the Department's Designated Agency Ethics Official and will comply with that agreement. I am not aware of any other conflicts of interest.*

6. Please provide written opinions provided to the Committee by the designated agency ethics officer of the agency to which you are nominated and by the Office of Government Ethics concerning potential conflicts of interest or any legal impediments to your serving in this position?

*I have consulted, and will continue to consult, with the Office of Government Ethics and the Department's Designated Agency Ethics Official to identify potential conflicts of interest. I have entered into an ethics agreement with the Department's Designated Agency Ethics Official and will comply with that agreement. I am not aware of any other conflicts of interest.*

**D. LEGAL MATTERS**

1. Have you ever been disciplined or cited for a breach of ethics by, or been the subject of a complaint to any court, administrative agency, professional association, disciplinary committee, or other professional group? If so, please explain.

*No*

2. Have you ever been a subject of an investigation, or investigated, arrested, charged, or held by any Federal, State, or other law enforcement authority for violation of any Federal, State, county, or municipal law, regulation, or ordinance, other than for a minor traffic offense? If so, please explain.

*No*

3. Have you or any entity, partnership or other association, whether incorporated or unincorporated, of which you are or were an officer ever been involved as a party in an administrative agency proceeding or civil litigation? If so, please explain.

*None*

4. Have you ever been convicted (including pleas of guilty or *nolo contendere*) of any criminal violation other than a minor traffic offense? If so, please explain.

*No*

5. Please advise the Committee of any additional information, favorable or unfavorable, which you feel should be disclosed in connection with your nomination.

*N/A*

**E. RELATIONSHIP WITH COMMITTEE**

1. Will you ensure that your department/agency complies with deadlines for information set by congressional committees?

Yes

2. Will you ensure that your department/agency responds to all congressional inquiries from members in a timely manner?

Yes

3. Will you ensure that your department/agency does whatever it can to protect congressional witnesses and whistle blowers from reprisal for their testimony and disclosures?

Yes

4. Will you cooperate in providing the committee with requested witnesses, including technical experts and career employees, with firsthand knowledge of matters of interest to the Committee in a timely manner?

Yes

5. Please explain how if confirmed, you will review regulations issued by your department/agency, and work closely with Congress, to ensure that such regulations comply with the spirit of the laws passed by Congress.

*I am solutions-oriented and take a disciplined approach to instituting change and solving problems. Further, I place a high value on cooperative and transparent relationships. I believe that these traits are necessary in order to carry out an effective review and reform of the regulatory environment within Indian Affairs. I will also seek the counsel of subject matter experts, including those within the agency and Members of Congress and their staff.*

*If confirmed, I will assist the Secretary in conducting a programmatic and structural analysis of Indian Affairs. I will engage each program to discuss needed regulatory reform, consistent with the responsibilities and priorities of Indian Affairs.*

6. Are you willing to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee upon request of the Congress on such occasions as reasonably requested to do so?

Yes

**F. GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS AND VIEWS**

1. How does your previous professional experiences and education qualify you for the position for which you have been nominated?

*I was raised in rural Alaska, where living conditions are some of the most remote in the nation. Upon graduating from Cornell University, instead of pursuing a professional degree, I chose to return home and get to work.*

*My entire professional career has been focused on promoting self-determination and improving the quality of life in rural Alaska and in Native communities around the country, and my experiences have revolved around advocacy for societal and economic self-determination in many diverse Native communities. My work has made me comfortable leading large organizations and managing multiple projects and staff. It has also focused me to be a results-oriented manager. I have gained experience here in Washington, D.C., working with and educating both politicians and policymakers. Due to my service as the international chair of the Arctic Economic Council I have also refined my skills at international diplomatic relations.*

*My lifetime of experience has taught me how to adapt and thrive in challenging positions, and I have consistently worked to create opportunities for Native communities and people. Throughout my career I have left behind a proven track record of results.*

2. Why do you wish to serve in the position for which you have been nominated?

*I strongly believe that living conditions throughout Indian Country can be improved. The status quo in Indian Country is unacceptable, and I am concerned that it has persisted too long in government. America's indigenous population -- from South Dakota to Hawaii, to Alaska, Minnesota, and Maine and all points in between -- ranks high in troubling statistics. Substance abuse, domestic violence, health issues, low educational achievement, and poor living conditions serve to block economic progress and healthy communities. Opportunity is a strong antidote to these problems, and Indian Affairs should play a meaningful and significant role. If confirmed, I will focus on improving this role, creating meaningful opportunities, and determining where our participation adds value and when we should recognize that there may be a better alternative.*

3. What goals have you established for your first two years in this position, if confirmed?

*If confirmed, I will support the Secretary's goal to ensure that the federal government is coordinating more efficiently and effectively within Indian Country and with Alaska Natives. I will work tirelessly within the Department and with Indian Country to identify and implement changes that support improved quality of life in Indian Country.*

4. What skills do you believe you may be lacking which may be necessary to successfully carry out this position? What steps can be taken to obtain those skills?

*I have spent the majority of my life in the private sector and while I believe this will bring new energy and a fresh perspective to the position, I will need to learn the minutiae of federal administrative processes.*

*and the scope of authority that the position holds over the programs that it manages. To obtain these necessary skills, I will work with subject matter experts and seek the necessary counsel within the Department among career staff, Administration leaders and congressional staff.*

5. Please discuss your philosophical views on the role of government. Include a discussion of when you believe the government should involve itself in the private sector, when society's problems should be left to the private sector, and what standards should be used to determine when a government program is no longer necessary.

*Government should provide a hand up, not a hand out. Government should offer empowerment; it should elevate communities and serve as a catalyst for innovative solutions that foster public-private partnership. Government should be nimble and dynamic. A one-size-fits-all approach does not work in Indian Country. The relationships between the U.S. Government and Indian tribes, Alaska Native tribes and Native corporations are distinct, and are defined through regulations, statutes, executive orders, court decisions and treaties. It is imperative that the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs understand and make the most of these relationships to effectively deliver programs and services to tribes and Native corporations. I believe that significant weight should be given to whether any particular program delivers the maximum value to its target population in an efficient manner, and that should be determined through consultation with tribes. If not, then collaboration is necessary to find a more effective and efficient approach.*

6. Describe the current mission, major programs, and major operational objectives of the department/agency to which you have been nominated.

*The missions of the BIA and BIE are to enhance quality of life and provide economic and educational opportunities that promote the protection of trust assets in Indian Country and whole-being education that is aligned with tribal needs. The incredible breadth of services provided through Indian Affairs - Indian gaming approvals; wildland fire and forestry management; land into trust; contracting/compacting matters; access to capital; and upholding tribal sovereignty - is significant and meaningful.*

7. What do you believe to be the top three challenges facing the department/agency and why?

*I believe the top three challenges facing Indian Affairs are 1) Complacency; 2) Paternalism; and 3) a uniform approach to a diverse Indian Country. These are all challenges and are the underlying factors for the perpetuation of the status quo. If confirmed, I will work to improve the quality of life and services within Indian Country.*

8. In reference to question number six, what factors in your opinion have kept the department/agency from achieving its missions over the past several years?

*Institutional inertia. Change is difficult and the path of least resistance is comfortable, which often means sticking with the status quo. Increased collaboration, consultation, and partnership are needed to*



*create progress and change. Examples include exploring partnerships within Indian Country for appropriate and necessary forestry management and mitigation, and right-sizing the permitting process for energy development on Indian lands so it is on par with energy development on public and private lands elsewhere.*

9. Who are the stakeholders in the work of this department/agency?

*Overall, the stakeholders include tribes, tribal landowners, private landowners, Native communities, sister DOI agencies, any federal department that oversees or has jurisdiction over projects, services, or capital impacting Indian Country, industry, and the American people.*

10. What is the proper relationship between the position to which you have been nominated, and the stakeholders identified in question number nine?

*As a general rule, I believe the Assistant Secretary should foster an accessible, transparent, and collaborative relationship with these stakeholders.*

11. The Chief Financial Officers Act requires all government departments and agencies to develop sound financial management practices.

a) What do you believe are your responsibilities, if confirmed, to ensure that your department/agency has proper management and accounting controls?

*The responsibility of the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs in this regard includes restoring trust to the accounting and management of Indian Trust financial assets and compliance with the appropriate laws. I recognize that this has been a challenge in the past and that it continues to be a challenge today. If confirmed, I will work with appropriate staff to analyze the current policies and procedures and audit findings with the intent to find areas upon which Indian Affairs can improve the delivery of these important services.*

b) What experience do you have in managing a large organization?

*For the past twenty years I have served as a manager and thought leader in Alaska's largest privately owned company, the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation. I have directly supervised staff of at least fifteen individuals, but I am also responsible for delivering results for approximately 13,000 Inupiat Eskimo owners and approximately 11,000 employees nationwide. In addition to these executive duties at ASRC, I have led statewide coalitions and organizations, driven Native policy efforts, built an international structure for a pan-Arctic, pro-growth organization. I am comfortable navigating within large organizations and managing large scope projects. I know how to effect change in large organizations, and am skilled using concepts of innovative teaming.*

12. The Government Performance and Results Act requires all government departments and agencies to identify measurable performance goals and to report to Congress on their success in achieving these goals.

- a) What benefits, if any, do you see in identifying performance goals and reporting on progress in achieving those goals?

*Goals, performance evaluations, gap analyses, and the development and execution of strategic plans are commonplace in the private sector. The absence of these tools breeds ineffectiveness, inefficiencies and lack of direction. I place a high value on establishing goals because I believe that is the best tool to measure whether change is effective. Establishing clear goals for appointed and career staff will assist in measuring achievement and ensuring that managers have the tools necessary to hold employees accountable.*

- b) What steps should Congress consider taking when a department/agency fails to achieve its performance goals? Should these steps include the elimination, privatization, downsizing, or consolidation of departments and/or programs?

*Congress should analyze the situation, identify deficiencies, and work with the agency to make necessary improvements, before taking drastic measures. The focus should be to maximize quality service delivery to Indian Country and find solutions to any impediments. Changing or eliminating programs or services for Indian tribes or people will require government to government and government to Alaska Native consultation. In the event an acceptable solution cannot be identified, then necessary reform actions would be warranted.*

- c) What performance goals do you believe should be applicable to your personal performance, if confirmed?

*I should be held to the same standard as my peers. My personal goals include raising the standard of living in Indian Country through collaboration and partnership with financial institutions; improving broadband connectivity; raising the quality of the service delivery for education through technology; establishing innovative partnerships with Tribes for resource, forestry, and land development and management; and ensuring Indian Country has a seat at the table within agencies and departments that make decisions on matters impacting American Indians and Alaska Natives.*

13. Please describe your philosophy of supervisor/employee relationships. Generally, what supervisory model do you follow? Have any employee complaints been brought against you?

*I believe in building effective teams where each team member approaches their work as a growth opportunity and is oriented toward succession, specialized and adept in their own skill set, but proactive and interested in learning new skills. I strive to build a collaborative work environment where subject matter experts share information upon which recommendations for action can be made. I place a high*

value on employees who are aligned with the vision and mission because I believe it leads to more effective leadership, policy, and practices. I do not place a high value on micro-management. I believe in the talent of my employees, but I will not hesitate to take necessary measures, when appropriate, to ensure my teams are meeting the established goals.

14. Describe your working relationship, if any, with the Congress. Does your professional experience include working with committees of Congress? If yes, please explain.

*My professional experience with Congress includes testifying before Congressional committees on a variety of issues. I have worked directly with Members and personal and committee staff. As I noted in response to an earlier question, in my position as EYP of External Affairs for ASRC, I have been engaged in activities related to Congressional education and outreach on a number of issues.*

15. Please explain what you believe to be the proper relationship between yourself, if confirmed, and the Inspector General of your department/agency.

*If I am confirmed, my relationship with the Inspector General will be grounded in compliance and respect. Because of the Inspector General's role as the Department's watchdog on issues of waste, fraud, and abuse, it is important that that office be an independent one and have access to the necessary information to provide the appropriate insight, analysis, and recommendations.*

16. In the areas under the department/agency's jurisdiction to which you have been nominated, what legislative action(s) should Congress consider as priorities? Please state your personal views.

*In order to best answer this question, I believe it deserves further consideration and consultation with Indian Country. However, I believe it is important to work with Congress to promote responsible economic and resource development on Tribal lands.*

17. Within your area of control, will you pledge to develop and implement a system that allocates discretionary spending in an open manner through a set of fair and objective established criteria? If yes, please explain what steps you intend to take and a time frame for their implementation. If not, please explain why.

*Yes, I will include this topic as part of the programmatic and structural review and analysis of Indian Affairs and outreach to tribes and Alaska Native corporations that I plan to carry out. I believe it is important to first understand what is currently in place and the effectiveness of such procedures before making any changes.*

## G. FINANCIAL DATA

Information not released to the public.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Ms. Sweeney.

We will begin questioning with five-minute rounds of questions.

The President's budget request for fiscal 2019 proposes creating an \$18 billion public lands infrastructure fund. Money in the fund would be used to address repairs and improvements for BIA schools as well as national parks and national wildlife refuges.

If confirmed, how would you use available resources to repair and improve BIE schools?

Ms. SWEENEY. Thank you for the question, Chairman Hoeven.

While I have not been involved in the discussions about infrastructure or funding discussions inside the department, when you look at the state of the Bureau of Indian Education's schools, there certainly is a lot of work that needs to be done.

In my first 180 days, my intention is to take a very disciplined approach to working with Indian Country, to answer your question, and engaging first and foremost in consultation with tribes.

The CHAIRMAN. How about opioids? Obviously it is a problem everywhere. What are your thoughts on how we combat the opioid problem in Indian Country?

Ms. SWEENEY. Whether it is methamphetamines or opioids, it is an epidemic in Indian Country. Everyone sitting in this room and people in Indian Country, there is no one untouched by this epidemic. It is a very serious epidemic impacting our communities.

My intention is to learn from tribal leaders, tribal nations and Indian Country through consultation about what will serve their communities best. In my opening statement, I said Indian Country is not a homogenous community. What may work in the southwest may or may not work in the Plains, Alaska or in the Northwest.

First and foremost, working with Indian Country to understand what works in their region certainly will be a priority for me.

The CHAIRMAN. I agree with you on that point. One of the things I have been struck by in my time as Chair of this Committee is the incredible diversity in Indian Country. It is just amazing. Some reservations are very rural, some are urban but the differences out there are incredible. You are right, one size does not fit all. I think that is a very important point.

Another issue we are very concerned about is child safety. As a matter of fact, I introduced legislation which we passed in 2016, the Native American Children's Safety Act. It really goes to making sure we have background checks in foster care homes and those kinds of things.

How do you make sure we not only fully implement legislation like that? Talk to me about what we can do on behalf of children's safety.

Ms. SWEENEY. Thank you again for that question.

With respect to child safety and the Act you referenced, I am concerned there are barriers to entry for our Native children in meeting the intent of the legislation you have proposed. By that, I mean I am concerned that tribal entities do not have the appropriate resources necessary to ensure children are being placed in appropriate homes if a background cannot be conducted. That is extremely concerning to me.

I would tackle that with my private sector experience by working with the Department of Justice and other departments of jurisdiction to address child safety issues. While we may not be the experts inside of the Department of the Interior, there are other experts throughout the Administration with which we can build partnerships, leverage resources and work to tackle this issue in partnership with this Committee.

The CHAIRMAN. Another area under HHS, even though it does not come under your jurisdiction, is the Indian Health Service. Again, any help you can provide is very important in terms of not only protecting children, families and women, but also their health care and health needs. It is certainly an area in which you will need to collaborate as well in this position.

Vice Chairman Udall?

Senator UDALL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Sweeney, thank you for recently meeting with me to discuss your nomination. As you may recall, we discussed the importance

of transparency and impartiality in your role as the Assistant Secretary, if confirmed.

Since you possess birthright shares in the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, you promised me that you would “totally recuse yourself from any matter involving ASRC” so that you could avoid any conflicts of interest. That recusal includes oil and gas development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Will you honor that promise of recusal that you made to me?

Ms. SWEENEY. Thank you for raising that issue, Vice Chairman Udall. I did appreciate the time that we spent together in your office and with your staff.

With respect to my ethics pledge, I have pledged to recuse myself from any matters regarding Arctic Slope Regional Corporation. I would have done that regardless of the pledge because it is the right thing to do. To answer your question, yes.

Senator UDALL. Will you recuse yourself from any matter that may benefit ASRC, including oil and gas development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge?

Ms. SWEENEY. My ethics pledge requires me to recuse myself from all matters pertaining to ASRC and I will adhere to that, yes.

Senator UDALL. Thank you.

Ms. Sweeney, I come from an oil and gas producing State, so I understand the importance of oil and gas development for jobs and the economy. However, I also understand the importance of recognizing when an area is simply too important to develop, whether it be for preserving cultural heritage or protecting sensitive ecology.

I believe responsible drilling and cultural preservation are not mutually exclusive. In New Mexico, for example, we have an area known as Chaco Canyon, a truly magnificent home to ancient ruins, petroglyphs and other archaeological treasures prized by many of the tribes in the southwest that maintain a strong spiritual relationship to the land. However, Chaco is also located in one of the most productive oil and gas regions in the Country.

Do you believe there are places so important that natural resources development, like oil and gas, should be off limits?

Ms. SWEENEY. With respect to my nomination and the role of Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, I believe in self-determination. Working with tribal leaders and working with Indian Country on their priorities is something important to me.

I want to work with tribes, and if they are choosing to develop their resources, whether extractive or renewable, my role as Assistant Secretary, if confirmed, is to ensure tribes have the tools necessary to exercise their right to full self-determination.

Senator UDALL. If confirmed, do I have your support to work with me and my staff with respect to Chaco Canyon and the concerns that tribes have there?

Ms. SWEENEY. Yes.

Senator UDALL. Looking from the outside, it appears that Indian Affairs within Interior is in complete disarray. The BIA director just resigned under a cloud of suspicion. Eight out of the 12 regional directors in the BIA are temporary.

I have also just learned that Interior will replace the Navajo Nation's long-time regional director with a D.C. employee who has no connection to the Navajo community.

What will you do to stabilize the department and the Indian Affairs team in these uncertain and turbulent times?

Ms. SWEENEY. While I cannot speak to any of the personnel or human resource type of activity taking place within the department today, best practices in the private industry and what I would bring to the department would be a very disciplined approach to management, one where within the first 180 days, I intend to sit down with department staff to understand the challenges in the department and understand what issues we face with respect to personnel management.

How can we fill those gaps? How can we ensure the employees within the department are staying true to the mission? Put politics aside, Indian Affairs is the department of self-determination.

I am committed to upholding the trust responsibility to Indian Country, to ensuring the Federal Government is, in fact, fulfilling that responsibility and advocating for that in the Administration.

In order to ensure that we have a very strong workforce, it is important to create that alignment in the department. I want people who are committed to the mission working for Indian Affairs.

Senator UDALL. Thank you for that answer.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Murkowski.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Tara, for being here, your willingness to serve and that of your family. Because it is family service, we appreciate that.

I want to follow up on the comments the Vice Chairman just made about some of the issues within the agency itself, within the BIA. It is really disconcerting to see the news reports that this individual just resigned, stepped down, or was fired, but then further, to learn you had investigations going on that speak to, allegedly, widespread harassment problems within the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

I think it goes to the challenge, the charge that you heard from both Senators Tester and Heitkamp. You are walking into an agency that has lacked leadership and discipline that you just committed to bring.

It is discipline in management, working with personnel to understand they take with the same fierce determination you have just articulated what the mission is. We really do need you to shake it up. I have confidence in you and know you to be one who is not afraid to shake it up, make some waves, and to do the right thing for the right reasons.

As I have talked to colleagues about you and your background, one of the things I have heard is they seem a little bit uncertain. I am such an unabashed proponent of the fact this will be the first Alaska Native woman nominated to this position. But they are a little worried that you might be too Alaska-centric, that you do not have that breadth of understanding with regard to tribes in the lower 48.

Can you speak to that part of your portfolio, your skill set, and give my colleagues assurance that you will be the Assistant Sec-

retary for BIA and all of Indian Country, including our Alaska Native peoples?

Ms. SWEENEY. Thank you for your question.

Senator Murkowski, when you remove geography from the equation, the social issues that Alaska Natives, American Indians and Native Hawaiians face are the same. I come from a region that has 638 compacting to deliver health care. I come from a region that has a regional tribal housing authority. I come from a region that had BIA as part of our school system.

When you look at the social issues that we face in Alaska, opioids and meth addiction, domestic issues, educational challenges, as I have worked within Indian Country and with Indian leaders across this Country, we are more alike than we are dissimilar. We have more similarities.

For those who may feel that I am too Alaska-centric or I do not have lower 48 experience, I want to dispel that myth because I am committed to working very hard for Indian Country and, I would say, for Native self-determination regardless of geography.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Going beyond geography within the confines of our own borders, your role as the founding Chair of the Arctic Economic Council, building that organization from really nothing into this pan-Arctic organization that really shares best practices with regards to economic development and sustainability, how does that experience translate to your ability to guide, manage and bring about discipline within the Bureau of Indian Affairs?

Ms. SWEENEY. The Arctic Economic Council was certainly a challenge, because we had eight Arctic nations at the table and representatives from indigenous organizations within the circumpolar Arctic region. Starting with a budget of zero and no permanent administrative offices, we had to get to work and build an economic association that represented the economic needs of the people of the Arctic.

The AEC is structured similarly to the Arctic Council where the State Department represents the United States Government. The chairmanship terms mirror the same terms you will find within the Arctic Council. They are two-year terms, much like I believe what would be left in this appointment here.

During that timeframe, with the partnership of the other Arctic countries, we were able to negotiate with the Norwegian government to provide three years of initial funding for the administrative offices. We were able to locate permanently the administrative secretariat offices in Tromso, Norway.

We were able to establish an international organization with protocols and rules of procedure that help govern and guide the discussions about economic development in the circumpolar Arctic.

Taking that experience, whether it is in Alaska, through my private experience with the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, or the international experience I have had in standing up an organization, I want to take that same energy, those same experiences and translate that into the work at Indian Affairs because there is so much work that needs to be done. I am up for that task.

Senator MURKOWSKI. I know you are.

Ms. SWEENEY. Thank you.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Tester.

Senator TESTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Once again, Tara, thank you for being here.

I am going to make this very quick because in my opening statement, I pretty much made my points, you nodded your head a lot, so I like that.

I will tell you that in the last two weeks as I was back in Montana, I have had two tribes approach me about law enforcement. That means we have a problem largely with land-based tribes. I do not need to tell you, because you are from Alaska, about large land bases.

A lot of these tribes have reservations that are bigger than most States. I should not say most, but a lot of the States on the East Coast, so it is a big deal.

If you are confirmed, could you take a look into that to see what kind of resources are available to help these folks? I can give you a list. It is all seven tribes in Montana that need the help. You can start with Fort Belknap and Blackfeet.

The only other thing I would like to add is that we have a tribe called the Little Shell in Montana, the Little Shell of Chippewa Indians. For over a generation, in fact multiple generations, they have been trying to receive recognition. They have had it and had it rescinded. It has been a mess.

We have put pressure on Interior to do it and I would hope Interior would do it. We have recognized someone's tribes congressionally and I guess they do not have a problem doing that either except that it really is Interior's job.

In a bipartisan effort, I along with Senator Daines, when Secretary Zinke, the Secretary of the Department of Interior, was a congressman, he also had a bill to have recognition. The governor supports it; the attorney general supports it; the legislature supported recognition for the Little Shell.

I would just ask that this be on your priority list once you are confirmed. May I have that commitment?

Ms. SWEENEY. Senator, I understand both issues you have raised are very important to you. I look forward to working with you on them.

Senator TESTER. Absolutely. Thanks again for being here.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. How is that for being efficient?

The CHAIRMAN. We gave you the same number of minutes as you have fingers on your left hand. It is good you did not have more questions.

Senator Smith.

**STATEMENT OF HON. TINA SMITH,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM MINNESOTA**

Senator SMITH. I hardly know how to follow that.

Ms. Sweeney, it is so nice to have you here. I would like to thank you for your willingness to serve and for being here today.

Though I hail from Minnesota, I went to high school and middle school in Anchorage, Alaska. I would love to have a chance to compare notes with you, though I think I am a bit older than you are.

I would like to ask you a couple of questions. First, in my time with this Committee, I have heard from so many of my colleagues,



both Democrats and Republicans, concerns about the budget cuts and inadequate funding of programs in Indian Country.

I am so proud to be here giving voice to the 11 sovereign tribal nations of Minnesota but we have heard this from all over the Country before this Committee. Personally, I am worried about cuts to tribal housing programs and also the energy assistance programs. All of these are really needed and important.

I appreciate the commitment you made in your testimony to upholding the Federal Government's trust and obligation to tribes. I would like you to talk a bit about how you would balance that solemn trust and obligation that you would have, that we have, with the need to fund the responsibilities that we have in Indian Country?

Ms. SWEENEY. Thank you for your question, Senator Smith.

My management style is of transparency. I work to build high caliber teams. I also hold my employees accountable and provide the metrics for success so that, at the end of the day, we know what success will look like. Having measurable results is going to be very important to me, if confirmed.

When you talk about balancing the needs with the funds, first and foremost, I want to be boots on the ground. I want to go out and consult with tribal leaders on what their needs are in terms of funding, but also the tools Indian Affairs needs to provide so they can exercise their right to full self-determination.

Senator SMITH. Can you commit to working with me and others on this Committee to make sure you have the resources you need to be able to fulfill that obligation?

Ms. SWEENEY. Yes.

Senator SMITH. Thank you.

I would like to touch on one other thing I know is also extremely important to others on this Committee as well. This has to do with the reality, as I am looking at some data, that more than half of American Indian and Native Alaskan women and more than one in four men have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime.

This is a huge challenge. I hear from our tribal governments in Minnesota that there is this big challenge in terms of non-Native people committing crimes of sexual violence on Minnesota reservations and Indian Country all over the Country.

There has just been an inability of tribal governments to prosecute and sometimes an unwillingness of non-tribal governments around reservations to prosecute, to follow up and hold people accountable for this.

It is an issue of huge worry to me. Senator Murkowski and I are working to introduce legislation that would recognize and affirm an Indian tribe's inherent power to exercise their criminal jurisdiction over non-Indians when they commit crimes of sexual violence.

I would like to know if you would be willing to work with us? Can you commit to working with us and the Department of Justice on this terrible problem?

Ms. SWEENEY. I certainly look forward to working with the Committee on how best to address these gaps in tribal authority. I am also a very strong advocate for breaking down silos. If I have to, in my role as Assistant Secretary, if confirmed, reach out to other departments, agencies or bureaus, I am willing to do that.

Senator SMITH. Thank you very much.

I am out of time but I would like to have a chance to follow up, if I could, Chair Hoeven, on the Prairie Island Indian Community in Minnesota which is on an island in the Mississippi River.

They have two significant issues that directly affect them. One is the impact of flooding caused by an Army Corps of Engineers dam that regularly floods their small piece of land. The other is the presence of a nuclear power plant with spent nuclear fuel within a stone's throw of where members of Prairie Island live.

This is of huge concern to them. I would like the opportunity to have a conversation with you about that and work with you to find a solution to these problems.

Ms. SWEENEY. I welcome that opportunity.

Senator SMITH. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Chair Hoeven.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Cantwell.

**STATEMENT OF HON. MARIA CANTWELL,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM WASHINGTON**

Senator CANTWELL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Congratulations on your nomination.

I know I am late coming to the hearing. We were trying to discuss various health care issues with one of our tribal leaders from the Northwest.

First of all, I think my colleague asked you about recusing yourself from the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation interests, is that right?

Ms. SWEENEY. Yes, he did.

Senator CANTWELL. Does that mean you also would not seek a waiver during your time in this position to ask Interior to waive that recusal?

Ms. SWEENEY. I have the ethics pledge I have signed. I worked with DOI Ethics and provided them with information about my entire background throughout this process. They presented me with this ethics pledge that I have signed and continue to reaffirm that with matters directly affecting or with respect to Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, I will recuse myself, yes.

Senator CANTWELL. So you would not seek a waiver from that later and say, in this case, I should be able to weigh in?

Ms. SWEENEY. No.

Senator CANTWELL. Thank you.

Ms. SWEENEY. I will consult with Ethics if there is even an appearance of a conflict. My first stop is going to be Ethics.

Senator CANTWELL. Yes, thank you, I think you answered it. Maybe you can follow up and put it in writing too. You could ask or petition to waive that later so that you could weigh in on something. We want to make sure you understand the question I am asking.

Ms. SWEENEY. I certainly do understand your question, Senator. I will not be seeking a waiver.

Senator CANTWELL. Thank you.

On environmental laws, what do you think are the most important issues for empowering tribes to have a voice in the Federal system?

Ms. SWEENEY. When you look at empowering tribes or empowerment in Indian Country, it is about breaking down silos, about creating ambassadors outside of Indian Country, much like members of this Committee, to advocate for responsible policy with respect to Indian economic development, Indian environmental protections, safe communities, housing, and infrastructure.

It is also about bringing together thought leaders and industry experts. First and foremost, with respect to your question on environmental policy in Indian Country, as Assistant Secretary, if confirmed, I am going out to Indian Country and have that tribal consultation.

I believe decisions about me should not be made without me. It is important to provide that voice. The only way to get that perspective is by going local and working with tribal leaders.

Senator CANTWELL. I would say a lot of our Pacific Northwest tribes have counted on those environmental laws to make sure their issues on fishing rights and environmental issues are looked after in a government-to-government relationship.

I would just hope you will give them your focus. I know the Interior Secretary, at large, said something similar. I am not seeing all the evidence of that. He had a very different experience in Montana as a congressman and seems to ignore some of these as Secretary of Interior.

How important do you think taking land into trust is for Indian Country?

Ms. SWEENEY. Senator, thank you very much for your question.

I want to close the loop on that last discussion and state for the record, Native Americans are the Aboriginal environmentalists of this Country. I understand the importance of that connection to the land and the environment because that also defines why I am who I am as an Inupiaq from Alaska.

Going back to tribal consultation, the same approach applies when the Department of Interior, Indian Affairs, is looking to impact the daily lives, the policies and decisions that impact Indian Country, we have to, first and foremost, put meaningful consultation at the forefront.

With respect to land into trust, there is a process for that. I am committed to working within the law. I am also committed to working with tribal leaders on land-into-trust issues.

Senator CANTWELL. Thank you.

I know my time has expired, Mr. Chairman. I would just say that I think, as it relates to two big issues on development, the Army Corps in the Pacific Northwest definitely consulted with the tribe, but not so much that that happened in other parts of the Country on major projects.

We look forward to having your voice on those issues and upholding those environmental laws that are so important for them to be able to participate. Thank you for your answer on land-into-trust. I might follow up, if I could, Mr. Chairman, with a written question on that just to clarify.

We get that in your position, you are going to have people from different parts of Indian Country and we welcome that. We just want to make sure you understand the priorities that Indian Country has in our part of the world.

Land-into-trust has been a very big tool, the Port of Tacoma and the Puyallup Tribe that worked to make that bigger than the Port of Seattle all because they had the ability to take land into trust. We want to see it continue as an economic development tool.

Thank you.

Ms. SWEENEY. Senator, I certainly appreciate your perspective and understand these issues are important to you. I am willing to work with you and your staff on issues pertaining to your State.

I would like to say that Alaska and Washington have had such a collegial relationship in our histories. If you look at the leadership the Yakima Nation provided to the Alaska Native community in the 1960s when oil was first discovered and we were trying to figure out what we were going to do with our land claims and how we were going to assemble, it was through their leadership and support for our right to self-determination that we were able to come together as an Alaska Native community to have the debate.

It was their financial support that enabled people to travel great distances to engage in that meaningful conversation that then led to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. I hope in my tenure I can be a bridge between Alaska and Washington.

Senator CANTWELL. You will never get me to disagree that our Washington tribes show a lot of leadership.

Ms. SWEENEY. Thank you.

Senator CANTWELL. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Daines.

**STATEMENT OF HON. STEVE DAINES,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM MONTANA**

Senator DAINES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would first like to welcome Councilmen Morin and Stiffarm from the Fort Belknap Indian Community who have come a long way to be here with us from Montana. Welcome. It is good to have you both here.

In my capacity as Chair of the Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, I have led the charge against sexual harassment within the National Park system. I have done the same with respect to findings of misconduct within the U.S. Forest Service.

It is not talked about nearly enough that the Bureau of Indian Affairs actually suffers from the highest rates of harassment of any agency within the Department of the Interior. The department's September 2017 report details an estimated 40-plus percent of employees experience one or more forms of harassment over the course of a year. Those numbers are staggering.

I applaud Secretary Zinke's efforts to reduce harassment and assaults at Interior but it is going to take the leadership of the entire department and staff like you will be critically important to make that effort effective.

Ms. Sweeney, if confirmed, what would you do to combat sexual harassment within the department?

Ms. SWEENEY. Thank you for your question, Senator Daines.

To combat sexual harassment, first and foremost, I have a zero tolerance policy for sexual harassment. I strongly believe in cre-

ating a safe work environment for our employees. No employee should ever fear coming to work because of harassment.

It is going to be important to take best industry standard practices from the private sector and translate those into the public sector and working obviously with staff to ensure that it is a harassment-free environment.

Senator DAINES. Detailed in a footnote in the DOI harassment reports is the fact that less than 10 percent of Bureau of Indian Education employees chose to even participate in the study. In fact, the report noted, "The low BIE response rate resulted in too few cases for inclusion and analyses due to the unreliability of the estimates."

The first question is, do you see that as a problem and second, what would you do to increase reporting of assault and harassment?

Ms. SWEENEY. I certainly do see that as a problem, Senator. In my opening statement, I referenced my first 180 days taking a very pragmatic and disciplined approach to understanding the issues facing the department.

First and foremost, I would have internal briefings with staff and then, learn about other issues impacting Indian Country from other departments, bureaus and agencies. That would empower me with that knowledge to then sit down with the tribal leaders in Indian Country to have that discussion.

I believe with respect to harassment, whether just inside the department or systemic throughout Indian Country workplaces, we have to combat that. It is unacceptable for employees to come to work in fear.

Senator DAINES. Thank you.

Shifting gears, last month I received a letter from the Crow Tribe's judicial branch detailing how BIA caseworkers regularly fail to show up for child abuse and neglect hearings, depriving the tribal court of potentially life-saving information regarding the whereabouts and well-being of these children under the court's custody, among other serious shortcomings.

In fact, the 2017 Montana Child Abuse and Neglect Report revealed 14 child fatalities in Montana in a one year period. Four of them were Indian children. Doing some rough math, that is about 28 percent, although our Native populations in Montana are approximately 7 percent, so literally four times. I realize it is a smaller population size but we are talking about the lives of children.

At the end of last year, my bill to protect Indian and non-Indian children alike from the devastating effects of parental methamphetamine use became law. But there is still a lot of work to be done.

Ms. Sweeney, would you see better coordination across Federal departments and agencies as essential to preventing child abuse and neglect in Indian Country.

Ms. SWEENEY. Thank you for your question, Senator Daines.

To answer succinctly, yes, I do. I believe in breaking down silos. I also believe in creating strategic partnerships to address issues. Child safety and child neglect is one issue and there are many others.

Senator DAINES. Looking at the agencies, HHS, DOJ, DOI, often-times we get the proverbial stovepipes in getting better coordination and help.

Last is just a comment. I am working with DOI officials at this very moment to hold the local BIA caseworkers accountable to ensure the safety of the children in the Crow tribal court instance I brought up.

Thank you.

Ms. SWEENEY. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Murkowski.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have one more policy-related question regarding the 477 legislation. It is no longer legislation; it is now law, the Indian Employment and Training Related Services Initiative. I think we all recognize what a great tool that was across Indian Country to really streamline services and really help us do some leveraging.

We have now made this demonstration project permanent in terms of working across departments, as Senator Daines discussed, with employment, the tribal agendas, and really working to advance that. I understand that they are working now within BIA to get some MOUs out there in a timely manner. That will be important.

There is a process yet to get you firmly situated in this position for which you have been nominated but my hope is that, once you are confirmed, you will work aggressively with these other departments to help educate them about the benefits of this initiative.

We recognize internally how those benefits play out but in order to get everyone to work well together, it is going to require some education. I do not know if you have thought about what your plan might be to help facilitate that but know it is going to be important as we move forward.

Ms. SWEENEY. Thank you, Senator Murkowski.

With respect to the 477 legislation, the program, while I cannot speak directly to the status inside the department today, if confirmed, I am absolutely committed to innovative approaches to workforce development.

I believe workforce development provides opportunities for our people. Through those opportunities, we have the ability to then lift up our communities. Working as the lead agency under the 477 program is very exciting but I also understand the task ahead in educating other departments and Indian Country on the benefits of a program of this nature.

I am excited about that program and am certainly looking forward to creating innovative ways for workforce development in Indian Country.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Great. It is so important. I want to conclude my comments and I appreciate the second round, Mr. Chairman.

When you have repeated that you view part of the responsibility here to breakdown silos, I cannot stress enough how important it is. Think about the title for which you have been nominated, Indian Affairs. What is that? That is housing, energy, commerce, labor, justice, education, small business, and transportation.

You know what? We have Secretaries and Cabinet members for each one of those. You are tasked with the oversight of all of this, so we need you busting down doors and saying, we have to talk about how our Native people are going to be the most skilled, best trained, and able to take advantage of all kinds of efforts. You need to be knocking on the door of the Secretary of Education and demanding assistance with how we make sure that our Native children receive the best education possible, health care, energy and it goes on and on.

The responsibility the President has asked you to take on is an extraordinary one. It is challenging. I do have extraordinary confidence, but it will require inserting yourself in places where I do not think the Assistant Secretary for the BIA has ever felt comfortable moving into.

I think that has been part of the problem. The BIA has been kind of put on the side, we will get to it when we get to it. Funding, hmm, we will work on that budget when we get to it.

Inserting yourself into these places so that it is clearly understood this trust responsibility we have for our Native peoples around this Country is one that cannot be traded away or low-balled on the priority list. So it is big but I know you got it.

Ms. SWEENEY. Thank you, Senator Murkowski, for the confidence. I certainly appreciate it.

I am up to that challenge. For those who know me, they know that I work with no fear because fear has no place in the way I conduct myself or in how I conduct myself in the business world. I am not afraid to kick down doors if I have to or politely knock on that door, but I am persistent.

I have a vision for Indian Country that is economic empowerment. That includes breaking down those silos. It includes supporting sovereignty and the trust responsibility for Indian Country and providing them with the policies, the procedures and the tools to exercise their right to self-determination.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you.

Ms. SWEENEY. Thank you.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Vice Chairman Udall.

Senator UDALL. As I said in my opening, a successful Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs must be an informed and effective advocate for Indian Country priorities. If confirmed, that responsibility to advocate will rest on your shoulders not only with Congress and the Interior Department but with the entire Federal Government. I think that is really the point Senator Murkowski was making, the entire Federal Government.

I say this because since this Administration began it has expressed several positions that call into question the Federal trust responsibility and the United States treaty obligations to provide tribes with health care, education, housing and other social services.

It is not clear if these statements were due to lack of familiarity with Federal Indian law. This is the possibility that concerns me most, whether they were made with willful disregard for these well-established principles.

The most recent example involves the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services which questioned the unique legal status of Indian tribes under Federal law. Five members of this Committee signed my letter correcting CMS's apparent legal misunderstanding and urging HHS Secretary Azar to revise the stated misinterpretation by the agency.

While the agency has since walked back its position somewhat in response to my letter, it is clear that more education on basic tenets of Federal Indian law is still desperately needed. How are you going to address any future fundamental misunderstanding of Federal Indian law among the Executive?

Ms. SWEENEY. Thank you for your question, Vice Chairman Udall.

With respect to Federal Indian law and the Administration, I view my role as Assistant Secretary, if confirmed, as an advocate for Indian Country inside the Administration, inside the leadership of the department, but also across the Executive Branch. If we have to salt other departments with some education on the Federal trust responsibility to Indian Country, I am more than willing to do that.

Senator UDALL. Great. Will you commit to defending the unique legal status of American Indian and Alaska Native tribes?

Ms. SWEENEY. That would be my role as Assistant Secretary.

Senator UDALL. Great. Thank you, Ms. Sweeney.

The Bears Ears National Monument is a living cultural landscape of desert canyons and mountains that contains tens of thousands of archaeological sites, rock paintings, cliff dwellings and ceremonial kivas.

Many tribes, including some New Mexico tribes, consider the Bears Ears their ancestral home. I know President Begaye from the Navajo Nation, who walked in moments ago, has been a great advocate for that.

The effort to protect this special place by a monument designation came on the heels of years of hard work by the Bears Ears Intertribal Coalition and unified support from tribes across Indian Country, including the National Congress of American Indians.

Despite this strong tribal support, the national monument was rescinded. This move was unprecedented and ill-advised, in my opinion. I know that much of Indian Country agrees. As I have stated, if confirmed, will you be the highest ranking advocate for Indian Country within this Administration?

Ms. SWEENEY. Thank you, Vice Chairman Udall.

With respect to your question, I cannot speak for the process upon which the Administration has arrived at those decisions simply because I am not at the department. Moving forward, if confirmed, my role as Assistant Secretary would be to advocate for Indian Country in those discussions.

Senator UDALL. In light of that, I think you hit it on the head, I would like to know whether you will commit to clearly communicate and explain Indian Country's opposition to the Bears Ears decision at the highest levels within the department and at the White House?

Ms. SWEENEY. That would be within my role as Assistant Secretary, yes.



Senator UDALL. Ms. Sweeney, I am sure you are aware that the BIE was added to the Government Accountability Office's high risk list. The Bureau had a number of problems over the years and we all agree that more must be done at the BIE.

I would like to end by inviting you out to New Mexico to see the variety of BIE schools, especially to see examples of tribal and student success within the BIE framework. I look forward to seeing you out there. Thank you very much for your testimony today.

Ms. SWEENEY. I welcome the opportunity.

Senator UDALL. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. SWEENEY. Thank you.

Senator MURKOWSKI. [Presiding.] Senator Cortez Masto.

**STATEMENT OF HON. CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEVADA**

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Sweeney, welcome and congratulations on your nomination. Thank you for taking the time to visit with me. We had a great conversation.

Welcome to your family. Believe it or not, I have spent some time in Barrow, Alaska. Let me say, Eskimo ice cream is not the ice cream that I know.

Let me just point out that Chairman Torres from Nevada with the Walker River Paiute Tribe is here.

As you well know, we had this conversation about so many incredible tribal communities in the State of Nevada who all have the same concerns that you have heard, in a bipartisan way, from all of my colleagues, that we need an advocate, someone who is going to fight for our tribal communities. We have a system that appears to be broken and we need to fix it.

I would like to start with an issue that has come to my attention and I am disappointed that do not have more information. I am hoping you can help me with this.

The Department of the Interior's fiscal year 2019 budget justification includes almost \$18 million to begin the process of reorganizing of the Department of the Interior along 13 regional offices, yet the department has provided little information to Congress.

This request includes roughly \$900,000 to support the department's migration to common regional boundaries. I have seen only a draft of the map which would cut my State in half. I have been hearing from my constituents, from farmers and ranchers, conservation groups and our tribes who fear the creation of joint management areas would create another bureaucratic layer or an additional level of authority.

The question I have for you is, one, have you been briefed on the reorganization plan or do you know anything about it? Second, how would you address the concerns I am hearing from my constituents and I am sure across the Country as this reorganization occurs?

Ms. SWEENEY. Thank you for your question.

I have not been briefed on the reorganization so the actions that have been taken by the department to date, I am not read in on. So I am not familiar with how they have arrived at the decisions they have made.

Moving forward, if confirmed as Assistant Secretary, again, as I stated before, I want to be boots on the ground in Indian Country. I want to sit down and meet with tribal leadership to understand what their needs are and engage in meaningful consultation. With a reorganization effort that may be underway, it warrants that engagement.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. I appreciate that. The next question I have for you is, can you describe what you consider appropriate tribal consultation in this area? Let me just caution you, at this very hearing, at the same table, we had representatives from the Department of the Interior who basically said they haven't even had any tribal consultation yet. They have not talked to the tribes about this reorganization, even though it has been an ongoing plan for some time.

What do you envision that tribal consultation to look like?

Ms. SWEENEY. I would envision not a check the box mentality. I have sat on the other side of consultation meetings before. In the past, in the private sector, in my professional experience, at times, depending on the department, the mentality is very different. I am not going to bring a check the box mentality.

I truly believe in stakeholder engagement. I believe in going local first because that is the de-risking agent to any policy project, understanding that local perspective. That is the background that I bring coming from the private sector and the advocacy work I have done on behalf of our people on the North Slope and in Alaska. I want that to translate into Indian Affairs.

Meaningful consultation means engagement with tribal leadership. Meaningful consultation means listening and hearing the message but also working with the tribal communities to find the appropriate answers to advocate inside the department.

As Assistant Secretary, my role inside the department will be to aggressively advocate for those policies.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Can I also take that to mean that to be an advocate, if you are not invited into the board room to be there to represent tribal communities, that you force your way in or at least try to be there to be a voice if you are not invited to represent the tribal communities in this reorganization?

Ms. SWEENEY. I wish you knew my grandmother.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. I will take that as a yes.

Ms. SWEENEY. Let us just say I am persistent.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Good. That is what I am looking for.

I am also looking for a commitment that you would be willing to come back to the Committee as well and share with us always information that you need. I think my colleague, Senator Heitkamp, said it best. What we are looking for is an advocate here as well. We need to know what we should be doing.

We are all here in a bipartisan way to support our tribal communities, to support getting the resources where they need to be. Our goal has been to ensure we are hearing from you but you need to also let us know what you need.

Ms. SWEENEY. I welcome the opportunity to work with this Committee on such policies.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. I have one more question. I know my time is running out. It is just a follow-up on Ranking Member Udall's question on monuments.

Nevada, as well, has two new monuments, Basin and Range National Monument and Gold Butte. Both of these national monuments also contain important tribal cultural resources in need of protection. One of them, Gold Butte, is one that has been recommended by the Secretary of the Interior to change its boundaries.

My question for you is how will you defend against executive action proposing to diminish or eliminate these national monuments?

Ms. SWEENEY. Again, while I have not been involved in the decision-making process to date, I certainly understand this issue and the monument designation issue. It is important to you and other members of this Committee. I look forward to learning more about that.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the extra time. Thank you.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Senator.

I am done. I have had an opportunity to ask my questions and I am pleased you were able to field a range of questions. I think you can see from this Committee we are one that I think really takes our role as members of the Indian Affairs Committee very, very seriously.

I have had an opportunity to serve on this Committee every year since I came to the Senate. I have found there is a level of passion and these issues are so bipartisan. The issue that Senator Tester talks about, law enforcement, and what Senator Smith and I are working on, being able to provide for greater protection for the safety of people, it is not Republican or Democrat, it is just trying to find the right solutions for our Native people.

Some of the issues are very parochial to issues that may relate to tribes within the members' regions. We expect you to know all the finite little details of all of that and then the broader picture of the policies as they relate to land-into-trust, to workforce development and to economic opportunities and empowerment for our Native people.

The responsibilities are considerable but you, in my view, have certainly said those things I was hoping to hear, that you take very seriously the responsibility for consultation and that will be executed in a meaningful way and not, as you used the term, checking the box, to make sure you are in those places where Native voices need to be heard and represented, whether you are invited or not, to break down the silos when it comes to funding and within the bureaucracy, bring a discipline in management to an agency that many of us feel is broken internally right now.

That is going to require a lot of time and emphasis working within your team to build that team because there are a lot of people around this Country relying on you and your team to be very, very successful.

Again, I know you are up to the challenge. I have every degree of confidence. I could not be more proud as an Alaskan to be able to help shepherd you through this process. I am certainly going to

urge the Chairman and Vice Chairman of this Committee that we expedite a markup to move your name out of Committee to the Floor.

We have been without leadership at the BIA for far too long. We need exactly your type of leadership. I thank you for your willingness to serve, the willingness of your family to back you, and the many, many friends who helped make you the woman you are.

If there are no more questions for today, members may also submit follow-up written questions for the record. I would ask members do that promptly. I would also ask the nominee to respond fully and promptly to any follow-up questions we may have and also meet with any remaining Committee members who may wish to do so.

I think Senator Cantwell mentioned she was going to have a follow up or perhaps an opportunity to discuss further but the record will remain open for one week.

I want to thank you for your time and your testimony.

With that we stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 5:46 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

## A P P E N D I X

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA  
*Durant, OK, October 20, 2017*

Hon. Ryan Zinke, Secretary,  
U.S. Department of the Interior,  
Washington, DC.

RE: CHOCTAW NATION SUPPORT FOR THE NOMINATION OF TARA SWEENEY FOR  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY—INDIAN AFFAIRS

Dear Secretary Zinke:

Halito (Hello) and warm greetings from the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. I am writing to express our appreciation to you and the President for nominating Tara Sweeney to be Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior.

We were pleased to hear the announcement of her selection. That post is of great importance to the Choctaw Nation and to all tribal nations. From reports we have heard from others who know Ms. Sweeney, we believe she will ably and honorably fill that position. Having a Native woman of her stature and experience as Assistant Secretary will bring added value to the Department, especially in the areas of economic self-determination and self-sufficiency that are so vital to the welfare of our tribal citizens. We have great hopes that Ms. Sweeney's impressive economic experience will positively shape federal Indian policy in a way that honors our treaties, respects our governmental status, and removes federal obstacles to tribal economic development throughout Indian Country.

Yakoke,

GARY BATTON, *Chief*.

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NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS (NCAI), MAY 9, 2018

Hon. John Hoeven,  
Chairman;  
Tom Udall,  
Vice Chairman,  
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs,  
Washington, DC.

RE: SUPPORT FOR THE NOMINATION AND CONFIRMATION OF TARA MAC LEAN  
SWEENEY TO SERVE AS THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR INDIAN AFFAIRS

Dear Chairman Hoeven and Vice Chairman Udall:

I write to you on behalf of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the oldest, largest, and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization serving the interests of tribal governments and communities, regarding the nomination of Tara Mac Lean Sweeney to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. The Department of the Interior has an essential role in upholding the federal treaty and trust obligations. Accordingly, there is perhaps no more important pending nomination to ensuring the Administration is well-positioned to honor the centuries-old government-to-government relationship between Indian tribes and the United States.

Ms. Sweeney has demonstrated she meets the qualifications of the office. She is a member of the Native Village of Barrow and the Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope, and she has a strong record as an involved community member and leader. Ms. Sweeney has demonstrated her commitment to Alaska Native and tribal issues working for nearly two decades for her Native regional corporation and as Co-Chair of Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN). Through this service, as well as her considerable work with business and non-profit boards, she has gained extensive administrative experience and demonstrated her proficiency as a leader. She has also served the public as the Special Assistant of Rural Affairs and Education to the Governor

of Alaska. Given her experience and leadership qualities, we believe Ms. Sweeney has the ability to meet the demands of the Office of Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs.

Success as a leader depends both on an individual's merits as well as the strength of the team surrounding that individual. This is especially true for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs due to the Department's extensive responsibilities to the 573 federally recognized Indian tribes. We encourage the Department to ensure that it has the appropriate personnel in place to uphold its treaty and trust obligations to all of Indian Country.

In light of the foregoing, NCAI hereby offers its support for the nomination and confirmation of Tara Mac Lean Sweeney to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. Please do not hesitate to reach out to NCAI Executive Director Jacqueline Pata if you have any questions.

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U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, OCTOBER 17, 2017

Hon. John Hoeven,  
Chairman;  
Tom Udall,  
Vice Chairman,  
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs,  
Washington, DC.

Dear Chairman Hoeven and Vice Chairman Udall:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce strongly supports the nomination of Tara Sweeney as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior.

Ms. Sweeney would bring a wealth of experience to the position, having been engaged on a host of policy issues important to Indian Country with two decades of leadership positions at the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation.

She is a long-serving board member as well as past co-chair of the Alaska Federation of Natives, whose goal is to encourage economic development consistent with the needs of Alaska Natives.

Ms. Sweeney is also active internationally; she is a past chair of the Arctic Economic Council, an international organization focused on growing business and economic development in Arctic nations.

The Chamber has also had a long relationship with Ms. Sweeney. Her leadership encouraged the Chamber to create the Native American Enterprise Initiative, which focuses on crucial economic issues confronting tribally owned businesses and Native American-owned enterprises.

The Chamber strongly supports Ms. Sweeney's nomination and urges swift consideration by the Committee.

Sincerely,

NEIL BRADLEY, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT/CPO

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ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES (AFN), FEBRUARY 9, 2017

Hon. Lisa Murkowski,  
United States Senate,  
Senate Hart Office Building,  
Washington, DC.

Hon. Don Young,  
United States House of Representatives,  
Rayburn House Office Building,  
Washington, DC.

Hon. Daniel Sullivan,  
United States Senate,  
Senate Hart Office Building,  
Washington, DC.

RE: SUPPORT FOR TARA KATUK SWEENEY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, INDIAN  
AFFAIRS U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR

Dear Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan, and Congressman Young,

On behalf of the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN), I am writing to express our unqualified support for the appointment of Tara Sweeney for Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs, for the Department of the Interior. AFN represents more than 140,000 Alaska Natives, including 151 federally recognized tribes, 150 village corporations, 12 regional corporations, and 12 regional nonprofit and tribal consortiums

that contract and compact to run federal and state programs. Our mission is to enhance and promote the cultural, economic and political voice of the entire Alaska Native community.

We have worked with Tara for many years and have never seen a harder more dedicated individual who is focused on providing value and real results. Her work ethic is well known and is a real attribute to her and any position she might be appointed too. She is smart, thoughtful and hard-driving. To Tara there are no problems, only challenges to overcome, and opportunities to seize.

Tara will bring a unique set of skill-sets to this position. She understands how important the economic and energy sector is to sustainable Native communities and the continued way of life in rural America. She is very supportive of public-private partnerships to stretch limited federal resources. She understands the high-cost of living in remote rural Alaska and on the reservations. She also understands the delicate balance of protecting and harvesting wild game on federal public lands. She is a hunter herself and continues the long tradition in the Arctic of subsistence hunting and fishing.

Tara is well respected and knows how to build coalitions and lead teams to accomplish directions set by the Administration. She will provide excellent advice and counsel to the Secretary of Interior and the White House from her strong background and knowledge of promoting Alaska Native rights, cultural values, and economic sustainability. She has been immersed in public policy from an early age, with her mother, the late Eileen Panigeo MacLean a respected Alaska State Legislator representing remote rural areas in Alaska. Influenced by her mother's public service and her father's strong emphasis on education, Tara experienced firsthand the need to be well informed, to make good decisions, build coalitions and be focused on accomplishing real deliverables for the people who depend on effective government.

Tara's experience at Arctic Slope Regional Corporation and as former co-chair and board member of the Alaska Federation of Natives gives her a strong understanding of Native affairs both at the local, regional and national level. She will be a staunch supporter of the Administration and the Native people of our country. Her resume details specific experiences which show her capability and qualifications.

If we can provide additional information, please contact us.

Sincerely,

JULIE KITKA, PRESIDENT

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ANCSA REGIONAL ASSOCIATION, MARCH 7, 2017

Hon. Ryan Zinke,  
U.S. Department of the Interior,  
Washington, DC.

RE: SUPPORT OF TARA KATUK SWEENEY FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY, INDIAN  
AFFAIRS U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR

Dear Secretary Zinke,

On behalf of the ANCSA Regional Association (the Association), we write to express our unanimous support for the appointment of Tara Sweeney for Assistant Secretary, Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior. The ANCSA Regional Association represents the Chief Executive Officers of the twelve land-based regional Alaska Native Corporations (ANCs), as well as the President of the Alaska Federation of Natives. Our corporations are owned by over 121,000 Alaska Native people and were formed under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, 43 U.S.C. § 1601, et. seq. (ANCSA). Our mission is to promote and foster the continued growth and economic strength of the Alaska Native Regional Corporations on behalf of our shareholders. When measured against the top 49 Alaska-owned companies, ANCs account for 75 percent of the revenue earned, 69 percent of Alaskan jobs, and 86 percent of the global employment. Making up 20 of the top 49 Alaska-owned companies, Alaska Native Corporations have become an economic engine of Alaska.

The Association has worked with Tara for many years on issues facing Alaska Natives and American Indians, and feel she is particularly well qualified for this appointment given her more than ten years' experience in leadership positions and roles in private, public and non-profit organizations; and active engagement in Native American policy development and advocacy. Additionally, Tara has nearly 20 years of leadership experience with Alaska's largest privately owned company, Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC), currently serving as their Executive Vice President, External Affairs.

Tara also serves as the Chair of the Arctic Economic Council. She was elected to serve as chair by the eight Arctic states and six indigenous permanent participants. Tara has led many of our nation's efforts to form international arctic policy as it

relates to economic development. Furthermore, Tara has served as a member of the board of the Alaska Federation of Natives since 2009 and as co-chair in 2013–2014, leading that organization’s reorganization efforts, redrafting bylaws and other significant changes.

Tara is a dedicated, hard-working and fearless leader focused on providing value and real results across local, national and international boundaries. Her passion shows through in every challenge she faces. She understands how important the economic and energy sector is to sustainable Native communities and the continued way of life in rural America. She is very supportive of public-private partnerships to stretch limited federal resources. She understands the high-cost of living in remote rural Alaska and on the reservations. She also understands the delicate balance of protecting and harvesting wild game on federal public lands. She is a hunter herself and continues the long tradition in the Arctic of subsistence hunting and fishing.

The ANCSA Regional Association strongly supports Tara’s appointment as the next Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs, for the Department of the Interior. If we can provide additional information, please contact us.

Sincerely,

GABRIEL KOMPKOFF, CHAIR  
KIM REITMEIER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ARCTIC SLOPE REGIONAL CORPORATION (ASRC), FEBRUARY 14, 2017  
Trump Transition Team

RE: RECOMMENDATION FOR TARA SWEENEY

Dear Trump Transition Team:

Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC) is proud to support Ms. Tara MacLean Sweeney’s as the nominee for Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs (AS–IA) in the Department of Interior. Ms. Sweeney currently serves as Executive Vice President of External Affairs for ASRC and is responsible for all facets of the company’s government relations and communications. By way of quick background, ASRC is the largest locally-owned and operated business in Alaska, with approximately 13,000 Iñupiat Eskimo (Alaskan Native) shareholders and more than 12,000 employees stretching across Alaska and the Lower-48 states.

In her government affairs role for ASRC, Ms. Sweeney has formulated and advocated for changes in State and Federal policy, changes that affect the lives of rural Arctic Alaskans like the people of her hometown as well as for changes that affect the State of Alaska as a whole. Her advocacy has brought the people of the Arctic together with like-minded tribes of the Lower 48 states on issues from Indian energy development, to government contracting, to the development of broadband communication and other vital infrastructure. Ms. Sweeney has walked the halls of Congress and has testified in countless U.S. Congressional and Senate hearings on behalf of Native American people.

In addition to her internal posting at ASRC, Ms. Sweeney has served her home state and country—from her work as co-Chair of the Alaska Federation of Natives (2013–2014) to her most recent role as Chair of the internationally active Arctic Economic Council (AEC) (2015-present). At the AEC, Tara represents the business interests of the Arctic nations (the US, Canada, Greenland/Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia), as well as numerous indigenous Permanent Participants. In her capacity as Chair, Ms. Sweeney has illuminated the needs of Arctic communities and the highlighted the best practices of circum-Arctic business leaders. In her role as Chair, Tara Sweeney has the attention of the ambassadors and foreign ministers of the Arctic nations as well as a wider circle of related international interests.

In the U.S., strengthening the Federal Government’s relationship with Indian Country is vital, which is why I am so passionate about Tara’s potential role as AS–IA. Sweeney has spent her adult life promoting self-determination for Alaska Natives. She has forged policies which allow us to develop our own lands and refine our own energy resources—as well as protecting the cultural needs of our people that remain unchanged through time. She has earned a reputation for being an effective advocate for balanced Native American policy. As her own Statement of Qualifications shows, Tara comes to the task at Indian Affairs completely and extraordinarily prepared. Although uniquely suited to a potential role as AS–IA at the Department of Interior, I would argue that Ms. Sweeney’s skillset is nearly unparalleled and that she be considered for any position at an equal or higher place in your Administration.

Tara Sweeney is on very familiar terms with our Alaskan Congressional delegation and I am sure you will find a vote of confidence in Tara’s abilities from that



quarter as well. She, along with her husband Kevin Sweeney, are raising two school-age children (high school and college), and all are familiar with our nation's capital as both Tara and her husband have found need to be stationed in Washington DC at various times during their careers. Tara knows her way around the Beltway.

Let me congratulate you once again on the successful election and transition in Washington. If you have any questions regarding our recommendation of Ms. Sweeney, please don't hesitate to contact me directly. As you can see, we value Ms. Tara Sweeney highly and endorse her consideration knowing she has the potential to serve her people and her country at the highest level.

Sincerely,

REX A. ROCK SR., PRESIDENT/CEO  
COOK INLET REGION, INC. (CIRI), FEBRUARY 9, 2017

Hon. Lisa Murkowski,  
United States Senate,  
Senate Hart Office Building,  
Washington, DC.

Hon. Don Young,  
United States House of Representatives,  
Rayburn House Office Building,  
Washington, DC.

Hon. Daniel Sullivan,  
United States Senate,  
Senate Hart Office Building,  
Washington, DC.

Dear Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan, and Congressman Young:

On behalf of Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI), I am writing to express our support for the appointment of Tara Sweeney as Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior. CIRI believes Ms. Sweeney is particularly well qualified for this appointment given her more than ten years' experience in leadership positions and roles in private, public and non-profit organizations and active engagement in Native American policy development and advocacy.

Ms. Sweeney has nearly 20 years of leadership experience with Alaska's largest privately owned company, Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC), currently serving as the company's Executive Vice President, External Affairs. Her primary responsibilities include strategic policy and position development, implementation and execution, engagement with federal and state executive and legislative branches on improving policies affecting Indian energy, taxation, resource development, government contracting, broadband development and all facets of corporate communication.

Ms. Sweeney serves on the Arctic Economic Council, an international council established during the Canadian chairmanship of the Arctic Council, and in 2015 was elected to serve as chair by the eight Arctic states and six indigenous permanent participants. Additionally, Ms. Sweeney has served as a member of the board of the Alaska Federation of Natives since 2009 and as co-chair in 2013-2014, leading that organization's reform efforts to be more inclusive for Tribes and provide them with strengthened voting rights.

Ms. Sweeney is well respected and knows how to build coalitions and lead teams, skills that will enable her to accomplish the policies and directions set by the Administration. She will provide excellent advice and counsel to the Secretary of Interior and the White House from her strong background and knowledge of promoting Alaska Native rights, cultural values, and economic sustainability.

She understands how important the economic and energy sector is to sustainable Native communities and the continued way of life in rural America. She is very supportive of public-private partnerships to stretch limited federal resources. She understands the high-cost of living in remote rural Alaska and on the reservations. She also understands the delicate balance of protecting and harvesting wild game on federal public lands. She is a hunter herself and continues the long tradition in the Arctic of subsistence hunting and fishing.

CIRI strongly supports Ms. Sweeney's appointment as the next Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior. If we can provide additional information, please contact us.

Sincerely,

SOPHIE MINICH, PRESIDENT/CEO

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE DISTRICT 40, MARCH 29, 2017

Hon. Ryan Zinke,  
Secretary,  
U.S. Department of the Interior,  
Washington DC.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

It gives me great honor to show support for Tara Sweeney, whom is being considered for the position of Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs. Alaska, as you know, holds over a third of total federal lands within its boundaries and has more federally recognized tribes than any other region. Filling this position with someone intimately knowledgeable of both of these facets will not only bring valuable insights to these issues, but also increased efficacy to the position.

Within the parameters established by the Congress and the Executive Branch, the primary responsibilities of the Assistant Secretary are to advise the Secretary of the Interior on Indian Affairs policy issues, communicate policy to and oversee the programs of the BIA and the BIE, provide leadership in consultations with tribes, and serve as the Department official for intra- and inter-departmental coordination and liaison within the Executive Branch on Indian matters.

Tara Sweeney is the Executive Vice President of External Affairs for Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC), and is responsible for all facets of the company's government relations and communications. ASRC is the largest locally-owned and operated business in Alaska, with revenues in excess of \$2.6 billion, with more than 12,000 shareholders and 10,000 employees worldwide. Sweeney has been actively engaged as an advocate for self-determination for Alaska Natives and enjoys mentoring young professionals.

In 2003 she served as Special Assistant for Rural Affairs and Education in Governor Frank Murkowski's administration and most recently served as Co-Chair for Senator Dan Sullivan's (R-AK) successful 2014 Senate campaign. Sweeney has served on numerous business and non profit boards at both the state and national level. She was honored in 2008 as a "Top 40 Under 40" business leader by the Alaska Journal of Commerce. She currently serves as a member of the Ted Stevens Foundation, and as the chair of the Arctic Economic Council. Sweeney grew up in rural Alaska. While her family roots are in the Arctic Slope Region, she also lived in Noorvik, Unalakleet and Bethel. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial and Labor Relations from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.

I recommend Ms. Sweeney without reservation. I am confident that she will excel in this position and be a valuable asset to our country and for all future growth. If you have any questions you may contact my office.

Sincerely,

REPRESENTATIVE DEAN WESTLAKE

NATIONAL CENTER FOR AMERICAN INDIAN ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT  
(NCAIED), MAY 8, 2018

Hon. John Hoeven, Chairman;  
Hon. Tom Udall, Vice Chairman,  
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs,  
Washington, DC.

Re:Support for Tara Sweeney as Indian Affairs Assistant Secretary

Dear Chairman Hoeven and Vice Chairman Udall:

On behalf of the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development (NCAIED) and its Board of Directors, I write to reiterate our support for the nomination of Tara Sweeney to serve as the next Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs.

From the NCAIED's perspective, Ms. Sweeney brings the perfect set of skills and broad experience—especially in business, economic, energy and natural resource development—to serve in this important policy and managerial position at Interior. Her record of staunch, effective advocacy on Native issues—and leadership in and collaboration with NCAIED and other leading national native organizations—will enable her to work effectively to make positive change from day one on the job. The NCAIED leadership has come to know Ms. Sweeney during her nearly two decades working in a variety of capacities for her Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC), a \$2.6 billion corporation and largest locally owned and operated business in Alaska.

As ASRC's Executive Vice President for External Affairs, she has been responsible for government affairs and corporate communications, including strategic policy and position development and implementation, and government relations on issues such as Indian energy, taxation, resource development, government contracting, broadband deployment and access to capital. From her work on a variety of corporate and other private boards and federal advisory committees, Ms. Sweeney has gained valuable knowledge and developed relationships to draw upon in her new position. The National Center would be delighted to see this determined business executive, with a true passion for advancing business and economic development and self-determination in Indian Country, become the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs.

Personally, I know Ms. Sweeney as an astute, talented, effective and dependable collaborator and friend. In addition to her involvement with NCAIED's Reservation Economic Summit (RES), I worked with her on government contracting and access to capital initiatives when I served as an Associate Administrator at the U.S. Small Business Administration. The NCAIED supports Ms. Sweeney for Assistant Administrator, and urges her prompt approval.

Respectfully,

CHRIS JAMES, PRESIDENT/CEO

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SAULT STE. MARIE TRIBE OF CHIPPEWA INDIANS

Hon. Ryan Zinke,  
Secretary,  
U.S. Department of the Interior,  
Washington DC.

RE: SUPPORT FOR TARA SWEENEY AS ASSISTANT SECRETARY-INDIAN AFFAIRS

Dear Secretary Zinke,

First, let me welcome you to your new responsibility as the primary trustee for American Indian tribes in fulfillment of the federal government's trust responsibility. As a Member of the *National Congress of American Indians* Executive Board and Chairperson of the *Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians*, I was supportive of your nomination of Secretary of Interior and voted to approve sending a letter of support for your nomination. I also serve as the President of the United Tribes of Michigan and Vice President for the Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes.

In 2012, I was one of ten Tribal leaders who met with Secretary Jewell to welcome her to working with Indian Country. In January of this years, she invited a small group of tribal leaders back to give feedback on her work and to encourage us to work with you as our new Secretary. Please feel free to call upon me during your tenure if you need assistance.

I write to you today to express my Nation's support for appointment of Tara Sweeney as your new Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs. Tara has decades of American Indian/Alaska Native affairs experience spanning the private, nonprofit, and public sectors and significant experience in international indigenous issues.

Her strengths are in coalition building and listening to the voices of tribal leaders through meaningful consultation. Tara supports tribal sovereignty and recognizes the importance of upholding the federal trust responsibility. She has spent much of her career fighting for enhancing economic development opportunities for tribal communities. I expect she will continue that push as Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs under your leadership. Tara would be an incredible asset for Indian Country and would work with all tribes to strengthen the nation-to-nation relationship.

Thank you for your consideration. Again, I wish to congratulate you on your recent confirmation as Secretary of the Interior. I hope we may have the opportunity to sit down with you soon to discuss our federal priorities.

Respectfully,

AARON A. PAYMENT, CHAIRPERSON

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NORTH SLOPE BOROUGH, ALASKA, OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
December 13, 2017

Hon. John Hoeven,  
Chair, Committee on Indian Affairs,  
U.S. Senate,  
Washington, DC.

Dear Senator Hoeven:

I am pleased to write to you to convey my support for the pending nomination of Tara MacLean Sweeney to serve as Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs at the U.S. Department of the Interior.

I currently serve as the Mayor of the North Slope Borough, Alaska, the largest municipality in the United States in terms of landmass and the regional government for eight villages within the 89,009 square miles of the U.S. Arctic, north of the Brooks Mountain Range. The Borough has a population of approximately 10,000 residents, of whom nearly 70 percent are Inupiat.

As the Mayor of the North Slope Borough, and having served North Slope communities in various capacities for my entire career, I can tell you from personal and professional experience that Tara stands out as a leader among leaders within the Inupiat community. But Tara also has represented Alaska Native interests broadly, serving as co-chair of the Alaska Federation of Natives, whose membership includes 151 federally recognized tribes, 150 Alaska Native village corporations, 12 Alaska Native regional corporations, and 12 Alaska Native regional nonprofit and tribal consortiums. Tara has also represented the interests of the indigenous community on the international stage through her work with the Inuit Circumpolar Council and as Chair of the Arctic Economic Council during the U.S. chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the lead intergovernmental forum for the promotion of cooperation and coordination among the Arctic States.

Tara's expertise extends to many diverse areas—telecommunications, natural resource development, and American Indian and Alaska Native law and policy among them; but among this diversity of skillsets, I think it most compelling that Tara has the experience and proven ability to work with and across federal agencies and with members of Congress, state agencies, local governments, tribes and other stakeholders in the service of the American Indian and Alaska Native community.

We would be proud to see Tara Sweeney become the first Alaska Native to serve as Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs. She has my strong support.

Sincerely,

HARRY BROWER, JR., MAYOR

UNITED SOUTH AND EASTERN TRIBES SOVEREIGNTY PROTECTION FUND (USET  
SPF)  
*June 4, 2018*

Hon. John Hoeven, Chairman;  
Hon. Tom Udall, Vice Chairman,  
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs,  
Washington, DC.

Dear Chairman Hoeven and Vice-Chairman Udall,

On behalf of the United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF), we write to support President Donald Trump's nomination of Tara Mac Lean Sweeney as the Department of Interior's Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs (ASIA). The first Alaska Native woman to be nominated, USET SPF echoes her commitment to Tribal self-determination and the promotion of Indian Country's priorities throughout the federal government. As she stated during her confirmation hearing, it is critical that she act as a voice for Tribal Nations both within and outside the Administration.

USET SPF is a non-profit, inter-tribal organization representing 27 federally recognized Tribal Nations from Texas across to Florida and up to Maine.<sup>1</sup> Both individually, as well as collectively through USET SPF, our member Tribal Nations work to improve health care services for American Indians. Our member Tribal Nations operate in the Nashville Area of the Indian Health Service, which contains 36 IHS and Tribal health care facilities. Our citizens receive health care services both directly at IHS facilities, as well as in Triballyoperated facilities under contracts with

<sup>1</sup> USET SPF member Tribal Nations include: Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas (TX), Aroostook Band of Micmac Indians (ME), Catawba Indian Nation (SC), Cayuga Nation (NY), Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (NC), Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians (ME), Jena Band of Choctaw Indians (LA), Mashantucket Pequot Indian Tribe (CT), Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe (MA), Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida (FL), Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MS), Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut (CT), Narragansett Indian Tribe (RI), Oneida Indian Nation (NY), Pamunkey Indian Tribe (VA), Passamaquoddy Tribe at Indian Township (ME), Passamaquoddy Tribe at Pleasant Point (ME), Penobscot Indian Nation (ME), Poarch Band of Creek Indians (AL), Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe (NY), Seminole Tribe of Florida (FL), Seneca Nation of Indians (NY), Shinnecock Indian Nation (NY), Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana (LA), and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) (MA).

IHS pursuant to the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA), P.L. 93-638.

As the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs considers Ms. Sweeney's nomination, USET SPF would like to take the opportunity to focus on policy priorities for the incoming ASIA. The ASIA plays a critical role in elevating the voices of Indian Country, as well as delivering upon the federal government's trust responsibility and obligations. As the current Administration has yet to fully articulate its approach to Tribal Nations, it is vital that the incoming ASIA exercise leadership immediately to articulate a clear and comprehensive strategy for this Administration's efforts to fulfill its obligations in partnership with Tribal Nations. With this in mind, USET SPF would like to outline an approach the incoming ASIA must have to promote success in the position and for Indian Country.

#### **Commitment to Tribal Consultation**

The incoming ASIA must commit to robust and ongoing Tribal consultation with all Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Regions and Tribal Nations. This includes fully engaging with Tribal governments, including Tribal leaders, in a proactive and transparent manner to receive advice and guidance from Tribal Nations prior to federal action. USET SPF notes that Tribal Nations are just now being invited to consult upon the proposed reorganization of the Department of the Interior, despite the Department's continued implementation of this plan and an overall lack of specific information. With an ASIA finally seated, USET SPF hopes that the Administration will redouble its efforts to meaningfully engage in Tribal consultation. Tribal consultation is essential to the sacred government to government relationship between Tribal Nations and the United States, and is critical to ensuring the federal government fulfills its trust responsibilities and obligations. It is vital that the incoming ASIA regularly engage in a continued dialogue with Tribal Nations across the country, as well as honor our expectations and guidance with a goal of reaching consent for federal actions.

#### **Land into Trust**

As a core trust responsibility, and as a matter of justice arising out of the massive land transfer effected to the United States by Tribal Nations under conditions of duress, DOI has, for nearly 85 years, restored Tribal lands through trust acquisitions. These acquisitions enable Tribal Nations to build schools, health clinics, hospitals, housing, and provide other essential services to Tribal citizens. Moreover, because the trust responsibility is so deeply underfunded, many Tribal Nations depend on the economic development conducted on these lands in order to fund essential government services. Despite the views expressed by some outside of Indian Country, a majority of economic development on Tribal homelands does not result in significant revenue generation beyond supporting these services. DOI has approved trust acquisitions for approximately 5 million acres of former Tribal homelands, far short of the more than 100 million acres lost through Federal policies of removal, allotment, and assimilation.

The Tribal Nations located in the eastern part of what is now the United States have a lengthier history when it comes to the systematic dispossession of our lands as a result of hundreds of years of federal (and before that, colonial) policies. In the wake of these policies, a majority of USET SPF Tribal Nations hold only a fraction of their homelands and some remain landless. Therefore, any changes to the current landinto- trust process will have particularly significant impacts in the east. We continue to work to reacquire our homelands, which are a fundamental to our existence as sovereign governments and our ability to thrive as vibrant, healthy, self-sufficient communities. And as our partner in the trust relationship, it is incumbent upon the federal government, especially the incoming ASIA, to prioritize the restoration of our land bases.

As the BIA considers revisions to the Part 151 regulations, which are integral to Tribal Nation rebuilding, the ASIA must work in partnership with Tribal Nations to ensure this process promotes the restoration of Tribal homelands and does not give undue weight or influence to outside interests. USET SPF is encouraged by Ms. Sweeney's plan to conduct a listening tour throughout Indian Country on this and other issues, and plans to urge BIA to extend its comment period to accommodate this dialogue.

#### **DOI Reorganization**

USET SPF is deeply concerned that, despite the recent initiation of consultation with Tribal Nations, the reorganization of the Department of the Interior is moving forward in the absence of Tribal consultation. The Secretary has yet to significantly consult with or provide much detail to Tribal Nations on the reorganization of the Department, although we are aware of meetings held with federal employees and

other units of government. Yet, we note that new DOI regions have been proposed and there is \$900,000 set aside in the BIA Budget Request for its share of initial pre-planning responsibilities (with the knowledge that this figure will increase significantly in the out years).

We are further concerned to see what appears to be additional reorganization activities taking place at the staff level—again, without Tribal consultation. A number of Senior Executive Service employees from the BIA and Office of Trust Services seem to have been relocated and reassigned. While we understand that the Department is afforded the latitude to make employment decisions, Tribal Nations should be consulted as senior staff are reassigned—particularly at the regional level.

While USET SPF Tribal Nations acknowledge that there may unnecessary levels of bureaucracy and redundancies at the DOI, any eliminations or changes affecting Indian Country must be accomplished in fulfillment of the federal trust responsibility, and with the advice and guidance of Tribal Nations. With the appointment of the ASIA, we remain hopeful that the Department will take the opportunity to modernize the federal government and execution of the federal trust responsibility in a way that upholds the obligations of our sacred government-to-government relationship and promotes the full exercise of Tribal sovereignty.

#### **Commitment to Protecting and Increasing BIA Resources**

Because of our history and unique relationship with the United States, the trust obligation of the federal government to Native peoples, as reflected in the federal budget, is fundamentally different from ordinary discretionary spending. Inadequate funding to Indian Country needs to be viewed as unfilled treaty and trust obligations. However, for Fiscal Years (FY) 2018 and 2019, the Administration has requested deep reductions to nearly every line item within the BIA budget. We further note the long-lasting effects of continued underfunding for federal Indian programs. The FY 2019 Budget Request fails to reflect a prioritization of trust obligations and the related promises that are at the core of our special and unique relationship.

In reducing, eliminating, and calling into question the constitutionality of federal Indian programs, this Administration is ignoring and undermining its trust responsibility to Tribal Nations. Moreover, the message that this sends to all American citizens is one of disregard and dishonor, further exacerbating the challenges we face in educating the nation on our history, sovereignty, and the continued obligation to Tribal Nations. We are hopeful that under Ms. Sweeney's leadership, future Budget Requests for BIA will be more reflective of a commitment to honor its obligations and promises to Indian Country.

#### **Trust Modernization**

USET SPF, along with other Tribal organizations and Nations, is engaged in an effort to modernize the relationship between the federal government and Tribal Nations. The current trust model is broken and based on faulty and antiquated assumptions from the 19th Century that Indian people were incompetent to handle their own affairs and that Tribal Nations were anachronistic and would gradually disappear. It is time for a new model that reflects a truly diplomatic, nation-to-nation relationship between the U.S. and Tribal Nations, and that empowers each Tribal Nation to define its own path. This mission should inform each action taken by this Administration affecting Tribal Nations.

Our Trust Modernization Workgroup has identified 5 governing principles with which to engage in modernizing the trust relationship. They are as follows:

1. Strengthen Trust Standards—Adopt Implementing Laws and Regulations.
2. Strengthen Tribal Sovereignty—Empower Each Tribe to Define its Path.
3. Strengthen Federal Management—For Trust Assets and Programs Still Subject to Federal Control.
4. Strengthen Federal-Tribal Relations—One Table with Two Chairs.
5. Strengthen Federal Funding and Improve Its Efficiency—A Pillar of the Trust Responsibility.

Each of these principles addresses long-standing issues with the current trust model and was developed after the deliberation of Tribal leaders. Our Workgroup has also devised a number of short and long-term strategies aimed at realizing these principles. We look forward to the opportunity to discuss them with the incoming ASIA.

#### **Executive Order on U.S.—Tribal Relations**

Over the last several decades, every President, regardless of party, has issued executive orders regarding the federal trust responsibility and the federal government's relationship with Tribal Nations. We urge the incoming ASIA to assist in the

issuance of an executive order from President Trump that: (1.) Reaffirms essential trust responsibilities for all federal agencies; (2.) Affirms the “best interests” determination in favor of Tribal Nations in all environmental and administrative determinations; and (3.) Outlining the placement of senior level Tribal Liaison positions across the Administration to ensure that every department/agency is executing its trust obligations to the greatest extent. This order should speak to and confirm the unique and special nature our nation-to-nation relationship, its sacred responsibility to fulfill its treaty and trust obligations to Tribal Nations, and recognition, and support for the principles of our inherent sovereign authorities and rights. An executive order of this nature would set the tone for all federal agency conduct and provide certainty in the federal government’s approach to decisions affecting Indian Country. Consistency and commitment in the execution of the federal trust responsibility would likely reduce conflict between the federal government and Tribal Nations, as well as the number of trust mismanagement lawsuits facing the federal government.

### Conclusion

USET SPF thanks you for your time and consideration regarding the nomination for ASIA. USET SPF supports Ms. Tara Mac Lean Sweeney for this critical leadership role. We welcome her experience, commitment to self-governance, and dedication to the trust responsibility, as the Administration seeks to articulate a formal policy in relation to Tribal Nations and Tribal sovereignty. We urge her swift confirmation, so that she may begin her work without delay.

Sincerely,

KIRK FRANCIS KITCKI A. CARROLL, PRESIDENT/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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VOICE OF THE ARCTIC IÑUPIAT (VOICE)  
*May 3, 2018*

Hon. John Hoeven, Chairman;  
 Hon. Tom Udall, Vice Chairman,  
 Senate Committee on Indian Affairs,  
 Washington, DC.

Dear Chairman Hoeven and Vice Chairman Udall:

I write on behalf of Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat (VOICE) to express our strong support for the nomination of Tara Sweeney as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs.

VOICE is a 501(c)4 non-profit corporation whose twenty members include representatives from Alaska’s North Slope tribal councils, municipal governments, Alaska Native Corporations, a regional non-profit, and the tribal college from the North Slope of Alaska. Together, we represent the broad leadership of the North Slope of Alaska. VOICE was established in 2015 with the purpose of providing local advocacy and engagement from the Iñupiat people to state, federal, and international forums addressing Arctic issues.

Throughout her career, Tara has worked tirelessly on behalf of the Iñupiat people in Alaska. Through her work at the Arctic Economic Council and Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, she has been a champion of responsible resource development, recognizing its potential to strengthen local economies in rural communities; in her role at the Alaska Federation of Natives, she has promoted tribal self-determination and encouraged Alaska Native communities to advocate on their own behalf; and advanced cooperation and coordination among Arctic States through her work with the Iñuit Circumpolar Council.

We know Tara to be an effective leader who has gained much relevant experience through her influential positions locally as well as on the state and international stage. Tara excels at stakeholder engagement; her ability to work beyond the “silos,” the bureaucratic boundaries between federal agencies, state agencies, local user groups, and regional and local governments and entities is extraordinary and would be a great resource to the Secretary and Department of Interior as a whole.

Tara has been a great advocate for Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat, and her work on behalf of Alaska Native peoples cannot be understated. I am proud to recommend her, and we urge the swift consideration of Ms. Sweeney for the position of Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs in your committee. I thank you for your consideration of this letter; I look forward to working with Tara in her new role as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs on issues important to our communities.

Taikuu,

SAYERS TUZROYLUK, SR.,  
*President*

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ANCSA REGIONAL ASSOCIATION  
*February 10, 2017*

Hon. Lisa Murkowski,  
 United States Senate,  
 Senate Hart Office Building,  
 Washington, DC.

Hon. Don Young,  
 United States House of Representatives,  
 Rayburn House Office Building,  
 Washington, DC.

Hon. Daniel Sullivan,  
 United States Senate,  
 Senate Hart Office Building,  
 Washington, DC.

RE: SUPPORT FOR TARA KATUK SWEENEY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, INDIAN  
 AFFAIRS U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR

Dear Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan, and Congressman Young:

On behalf of the ANCSA Regional Association (the Association), we write to express our unanimous support for the appointment of Tara Sweeney for Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs, for the Department of the Interior. The ANCSA Regional Association represents the Chief Executive Officers of the twelve land-based regional Alaska Native Corporations (ANCs), as well as the President of the Alaska Federation of Natives. Our corporations are owned by over 121,000 Alaska Native people and were formed under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, 43 U.S.C. § 1601, *et. seq.* (ANCSA). Our mission is to promote and foster the continued growth and economic strength of the Alaska Native Regional Corporations on behalf of our shareholders. When measured against the top 49 Alaska-owned companies, ANCs account for 75 percent of the revenue earned, 69 percent of Alaskan jobs, and 86 percent of the global employment. Making up 20 of the top 49 Alaska-owned companies, Alaska Native Corporations have become an economic engine of Alaska.

The Association has worked with Tara for many years on issues facing Alaska Natives and American Indians, and feel she is particularly well qualified for this appointment given her more than ten years' experience in leadership positions and roles in private, public and non-profit organizations; and active engagement in Native American policy development and advocacy. Additionally, Tara has nearly 20 years of leadership experience with Alaska's largest privately owned company, Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC), currently serving as their Executive Vice President, External Affairs.

Tara also serves as the Chair of the Arctic Economic Council. She was elected to serve as chair by the eight Arctic states and six indigenous permanent participants. Tara has led many of our nation's efforts to form international arctic policy as it relates to economic development. Furthermore, Tara has served as a member of the board of the Alaska Federation of Natives since 2009 and as co-chair in 2013–2014, leading that organization's reorganization efforts, redrafting bylaws and other significant changes.

Tara is a dedicated, hard-working and fearless leader focused on providing value and real results across local, national and international boundaries. Her passion shows through in Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan, and Congressman Young every challenge she faces. She understands how important the economic and energy sector is to sustainable Native communities and the continued way of life in rural America. She is very supportive of public-private partnerships to stretch limited federal resources. She understands the high-cost of living in remote rural Alaska and on the reservations. She also understands the delicate balance of protecting and harvesting wild game on federal public lands. She is a hunter herself and continues the long tradition in the Arctic of subsistence hunting and fishing.

The ANCSA Regional Association strongly supports Tara's appointment as the next Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs, for the Department of the Interior. If we can provide additional information, please contact us.

Sincerely,



GABRIEL KOMPKOFF, CHAIR; KIM REITMEIER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES (AFN)  
May 3, 2018

Hon. John Hoeven, Chairman;  
Hon. Tom Udall, Vice Chairman,  
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs,  
Washington, DC.

RE: SUPPORT FOR TARA KATUK SWEENEY FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR  
INDIAN AFFAIRS

Dear Chairman Hoeven and Vice Chairman Udall:

On behalf of the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN), I am writing to express our unqualified support for the confirmation of Tara Sweeney for Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior. AFN represents more than 140,000 Alaska Natives, including 186 federally recognized tribes, 171 village corporations, 12 regional corporations, and 12 regional nonprofit and tribal consortiums that contract and compact to run federal and state programs. Our mission is to enhance and promote the cultural, economic and political voice of the entire Alaska Native community.

We have worked with Tara for many years and have never seen a more dedicated individual who is focused on real results. She brings a unique skill set, with a deep appreciation for the importance of the economic and energy sector to sustainable Native communities and the continued way of life in rural America.

She understands the high cost of living in remote rural Alaska and on the reservations and the delicate balance of protecting and harvesting wild game on federal public lands. She is a hunter herself and continues the long tradition in the Arctic of subsistence hunting and fishing.

Tara is well respected and knows how to build coalitions and lead teams to accomplish directions set by the Administration. With her strong background and knowledge of Alaska Native rights, cultural values, and economic sustainability, she will provide excellent advice and counsel to the Secretary of Interior and the White House.

Tara's leadership experience at Arctic Slope Regional Corporation and as former AFN co-chair and board member gives her a strong understanding of Native affairs both at the local, regional and national level. She will be a staunch supporter of the Administration and the Native people of our country.

AFN urges the swift consideration of Ms. Sweeney for the position of Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs in your committee, and we look forward to working with her.

Sincerely,

JULIE KITKA, PRESIDENT

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CENTRAL COUNCIL OF THE TLINGIT AND HAIDA INDIAN TRIBES OF ALASKA  
May 3, 2018

Hon. John Hoeven, Chairman;  
Hon. Tom Udall, Vice Chairman,  
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs,  
Washington, DC.

RE: SUPPORT FOR TARA KATUK SWEENEY FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR  
INDIAN AFFAIRS

Dear Chairman Hoeven and Vice Chairman Udall:

The Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska writes to express its strong support for the nomination of Ms. Tara Sweeney as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs.

Throughout her many years of work on behalf of the Iñupiat shareholders of the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation in her home state of Alaska and all Alaska Natives, Ms. Sweeney has established herself as an expert in and a proponent of issues with tribal government implications well suited to this position that is the face of the Federal Government's trust responsibility to and government-to-government relationship with tribal governments.

Ms. Sweeney is an experienced leader, having held executive positions within Alaska through her roles at the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation and the Alaska Federation of Natives, within Indian Country through her work with the National

Congress of American Indians, and internationally as Chair of the Arctic Economic Council.

We urge the swift consideration of Ms. Sweeney for the position of Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs in your Committee, and we look forward to working with her on issues important to Indian Country.

Thank you for your consideration of the Tribe's views.

Sincerely,

RICHARD J. PETERSON, PRESIDENT

Governor Bill Walker  
STATE OF ALASKA



November 13, 2017

The Honorable John Hoeven  
Chairman  
The Honorable Tom Udall  
Vice Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs  
838 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Hoeven,

We write you today to fully support the nomination of Ms. Tara MacLean Sweeney as the first female Native Alaskan nominated for Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs. As life-long Alaskans, we have watched Ms. Sweeney's leadership grow in direct proportion to an increased positive impact on the quality of life of our people resulting in meaningful opportunities for indigenous people of the North.

Ms. Sweeney's leadership in seeking self-determination and economic development for the people of the Arctic has been exemplary. As an Inupiaq tribal and corporate leader, she has sought the needed balance for her Arctic Slope region and across Alaska between needed economic development and sustaining the lifeways and cultures of Alaska's indigenous peoples.

Ms. Sweeney has not only worked on Alaska Native issues, but also has broadened her perspective with other American Indian tribes through her service on the Cherokee Nation New Market Tax Credit Advisory Board. When she was nominated and elected the co-chair of the AFN, Alaska's statewide Native organization representing all Alaska Native leadership and institutions, she undertook her role with a firm sense of purpose. Ms. Sweeney sought inclusiveness and transparency, and did so successfully when dealing with the many challenging issues facing an institution of diverse views but with common goal of pursuing a better life for all Alaska Natives.

She served with distinction as a Special Assistant for Rural Affairs and Education in Governor Frank Murkowski's administration, and her passion for educational opportunities for natives is well known. Ms. Sweeney served on many boards including the University of Alaska Foundation Board of Trustees. Her focus on energy, communications and Native self-determination will serve Native Americans well if she is confirmed. Her ability to bring various stakeholders and groups together to solve problems and improve the lives of American Indians will be critical.

Ms. Sweeney has sought and found the necessary and delicate balance between economic development and sustaining the ways of life and cultures of Alaska's First People. While many will be sad to see her leave the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, her expertise will serve our nation well in this new role.

We advocate for a streamlined process to bring Ms. Sweeney's expertise into the Bureau of Indian Affairs as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

Bill Walker  
Governor

Byron Mallott  
Lieutenant Governor

**COW CREEK BAND OF UMPQUA TRIBE OF INDIANS  
GOVERNMENT OFFICES**

The Honorable Ryan Zinke  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C St. NW  
Washington, DC 20240



Dear Mr. Secretary,

The Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians is one of nine federally recognized Indian Tribal Governments in Oregon. Restored in 1982, our tribe has a rich history in southern Oregon. Since our federal recognition 35 years ago, we have developed housing, education and social service programs, businesses, a utility cooperative, charities, and a tribal court system for our 1,722 members. We uphold Tribal Government and wish to protect and preserve Tribal sovereignty, and we desire strong relationships with local, state, and federal governments. As Chairman of the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, I write to express my Tribe's full support for the appointment of Tara Sweeney as the new Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs.

Ms. Sweeney has decades of experience as an advocate for Native people through her positions in the private, public and non-profit sectors. She is skilled at coalition building and stakeholder engagement and a strong supporter of tribal self-determination. Whether in her leadership role with the Arctic Economic Council, her tireless work on behalf of the Inupiat people, or her involvement with the National Congress of American Indians, Ms. Sweeney has a track record of promoting forward-thinking policy for Native people. I firmly believe she is an exceptional candidate for the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Position and I look forward to working with her in the future.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Daniel Courtney".

Daniel Courtney  
Chairman  
Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians



February 10, 2017

Honorable Don Young  
United States House of Representatives  
2314 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Sent Via Electronic Mail

Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senate  
709 Hart Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510-0203

Honorable Dan Sullivan  
United States Senate  
702 Hart Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support for Tara Sweeney Assistant Secretary, Indian Affairs US Department of Interior

Dear Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan and Congressman Young:

On behalf of the Aleut Corporation, I'm writing to express our support for the appointment of Tara Sweeney for Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs, for the Department of the Interior.

The Aleut Corporation is one of the twelve Alaska Native Regional Corporations that were established in 1972 under the terms of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). To date, the Aleut Corporation has approximately 3900 shareholders. Operations of the Aleut Corporation and its subsidiaries include Government Contracting, Fuel Sales, Mechanical Construction, Radiochemical Analysis and Remediation, Industrial Products & Services and Real Estate Management. The Company also participates in various partnerships, joint ventures and other business activities. We currently have over 900 employees throughout the U.S.

The Aleut Corporation works closely with Tara as she serves as the Chair of the Arctic Economic Council. She was elected to serve as chair by the eight Arctic states and six Indigenous permanent participants. Tara has led many of our nation's efforts to form international arctic policy as it relates to economic development.

The Aleut Corporation strongly supports Tara's appointment as the next Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs, for the Department of the Interior. If I can provide additional information, please contact me.

Sincerely,  
ALEUT CORPORATION

Thomas Mack  
President

**Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association, Inc.**

1131 E. International Airport Rd.  
Anchorage, Alaska 99518-1408



February 21, 2017

Honorable Don Young  
United States House of Representatives  
2314 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senate  
709 Hart Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510-0203

Honorable Dan Sullivan  
United States Senate  
702 Hart Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Re: *Support for Tara Katuk Sweeney Assistant Secretary, Indian Affairs U.S. Department of Interior*

Dear Honorable Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan and Congressman Young:

On behalf of the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association (APIA), we write to express our unanimous support for the appointment of Tara Sweeney for Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs, for the Department of the Interior. APIA is a non-profit organization represented and governed by 13 Alaska Native Tribes in Alaska’s Aleutian and Pribilof Islands, in a region that covers an approximately 100,000 square miles, an area slightly larger than Virginia, Kentucky, and Maryland combined. Our mission is to provide self-sufficiency and independence of the Unangan/Unangas by advocacy, training, technical assistance and economic enhancement; to assist in meeting the health, safety and well-being needs of each Unangan/Unangas community; to promote, strengthen and ensure the unity of the Unangan; and to strengthen and preserve Unanga’s cultural heritage.

APIA is a member of the Alaska Federation of Natives and has worked with Tara for many years on issues facing Alaska Natives and American Indians in her role as co-chair (2013-14) where she was instrumental in the organization’s reorganization

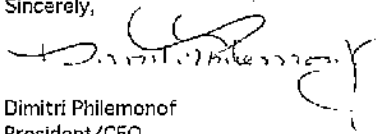
efforts, redrafting by-laws and other significant changes. Tara has been an AFN board member since 2009. We feel she is particularly well qualified for this appointment given her more than ten years' experience in leadership positions and roles in private, public and non-profit organizations; and active engagement in Native American policy development and advocacy.

Additionally, Tara has nearly 20 years of leadership experience with Alaska's largest privately owned company, Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC), currently serving as their Executive Vice President, External Affairs.

Tara also serves as the Chair of the Arctic Economic Council and was elected to serve as chair by the eight Arctic states and six indigenous permanent participants. Tara has led many of our nation's efforts to form international Arctic policy as it relates to economic development.

Tara is a dedicated, hard-working and fearless leader focused on providing value and real results across local, national and international boundaries. Her passion shows through in every challenge she faces. She understands how important the economic and energy sector is to sustainable Native communities and the continued way of life in rural America. She is very supportive of public-private partnerships to stretch limited federal resources. She understands the high-cost of living in remote rural Alaska and on the reservations. She also understands the delicate balance of protecting and harvesting wild game on federal public lands. She is a hunter herself and continues the long tradition in the Arctic of subsistence hunting and fishing. APIA strongly supports Tara's appointment as the next Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs, for the Department of the Interior. If we can provide additional information, please contact us.

Sincerely,



Dimitri Philemonof  
President/CEO



Honorable Dan Young  
United States House of Representatives  
2314 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senate  
709 Hart Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510-0203

Honorable Dan Sullivan  
United States Senate  
702 Hart Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support for Tara Katuk Sweeney Assistant Secretary, Indian Affairs U.S. Department of Interior

Dear Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan and Congressman Young,

Ahtna, Incorporated strongly supports the appointment of Tara Sweeney for Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, US Department of the Interior. Tara is well known in Alaska for her leadership on not only Native issues but also energy development and economic development issues.

Tara is uniquely skilled to serve as Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs. She is currently the Executive Vice President of External Affairs for Arctic Slope Regional Corporation; one of Alaska's most successful corporations. Her role is a very public one and requires that she is constantly troubleshooting issues as they arise and proactively responding to many different stakeholders, including her management & board and shareholders as well as the general public, other business partners and potential partners, legislators, and the media. Tara's board service includes the Arctic Economic Council and the Alaska Federation of Natives. Both organizations have important policy relevance that impacts the lives of many and demands an ability to work with multiple stakeholders. In both organizations, Tara has been elected to leadership roles which says something for her ability to instill confidence in those she serves and works with.

Tara is very knowledgeable of our state and federal legislative processes. She understands the value of people's time, is concise and factual, and she is respectful: she listens.

Ahtna, Incorporated supports the appointment of Tara Sweeney as Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs for the US Department of the Interior.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michelle Anderson  
President



February 9, 2017

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
709 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dan Sullivan  
702 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Don Young  
2314 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510



Re: BBNC Support of Tara M. Sweeney for Assistant Secretary, Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of Interior

Dear Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan and Congressman Young,

Bristol Bay Native Corporation (BBNC) writes in strong support for the appointment of Tara M. Sweeney for Assistant Secretary, Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of Interior. Ms. Sweeney has the drive, knowledge and experience necessary to fulfill this role effectively.

Ms. Sweeney has over 10 years' experience in leadership positions and roles in private, public and non-profit organizations, and over 10 years of active engagement in Alaska Native/Native American policy development and advocacy within the executive and legislative branches at the federal level. She currently serves as Executive Vice President, External Affairs for Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, Alaska's largest privately owned company, where she has worked for nearly 20 years. In addition to this role, Ms. Sweeney currently serves as Chair for the Arctic Economic Council, a 42-member board comprised of representatives from the U.S., Russia, Canada, Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland.

Bristol Bay Native Corporation is confident Ms. Sweeney will provide excellent advice and counsel to the Secretary of Interior and the White House with the unique skillset she has. She has a strong history of representing Alaska Natives, and has been on the forefront of developing Arctic policy—the frontier of the future. Ms. Sweeney has built coalitions and led diverse teams to accomplish concrete goals, which is why BBNC fully supports her appointment to Assistant Secretary, Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of Interior.

Sincerely,

  
Jason Metrokin  
President and CEO

cc: Julie Kitka, President, Alaska Federation of Natives  
Kim Reibneier, Executive Director, ANCSA Regional Association

February 10, 2017

Honorable Don Young  
United States House of Representatives  
2314 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Dan Sullivan  
United States Senate  
702 Hart Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510



Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senate  
709 Hart Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510-0203

Re: Support for Tara Katuk Sweeney Assistant Secretary, Indian Affairs U.S. Department of Interior

Dear Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan and Congressman Young:

Calista Corporation (Calista) supports the appointment of Tara Katuk Sweeney for Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs, for the Department of the Interior. Calista is an Alaska Native Regional Corporation, established in 1971, representing 56 villages that are incorporated into 46 individual corporations. Our mission is to increase Shareholder benefits and economic opportunities through innovation, growth, leadership, execution and financial discipline.

Calista recognizes that Ms. Katuk Sweeney is well qualified for appointment to Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs from her years of experience and engagement in Native American policy and advocacy. Additionally, Tara has nearly 20 years of leadership experience with Alaska's largest privately owned company, Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC), currently serving as its Executive Vice President, External Affairs.

More recently, Ms. Katuk Sweeney was instrumental in working with Calista Government Relations Liaison George Owletuck, Trump Alaska 2016 Honorary Co-Chair, and Jim Crawford Trump Alaska 2016 Chairman in providing ASRC financial support for the President Trump Alaska Inaugural reception in Washington, DC.

Calista Corporation strongly supports Ms. Katuk Sweeney's appointment as the next Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs, for the Department of the Interior. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

CALISTA CORPORATION

Andrew Guy  
President & CEO

February 15, 2017

Sent Via Electronic Mail  
The Honorable Don Young  
United States House of Representatives  
2314 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515



Re: Support for Tara Katuk, Sweeney Assistant Secretary, Indian Affairs U.S. Department of Interior

Dear Congressman Young,

On behalf of Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC), I am writing to express our unqualified support for the appointment of Tara Sweeney for Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs, for the Department of the Interior. CITC serves more than 10,000 Alaska Native and American Indian people in the Anchorage area with a holistic, wraparound investment in connecting them to employment and training, education, recovery services and child and family services. Our mission is to work in partnership with Our People to develop opportunities to fulfill their endless potential.

We have known Tara professionally for many years and appreciate her commitment, enthusiasm and creativity as she serves Alaska Native people in a variety of roles. I have served with her on the Board of Directors of the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN), where we share our passion for developing innovative ways that combine the strength of our past with the tools of the present. In her leadership role as Co-Chair, she worked tirelessly to change the governance structure to more effectively serve our people and to bring the organization more relevancy to the new generation and new century in which we now work. This task required navigating the very challenging arena of Native politics, which she did with grace and efficacy.

More specifically to CITC, Tara helped shepherd an investment in CITC's unique sustainability efforts. Several years ago, CITC through its for-profit subsidiary became the first indigenous-owned video production company in the United States. Tara and the Arctic Slope Region Corporation took the substantial risk of making an investment in our commercial game, Never Alone, which shares and extends culture in the form of an adventure puzzle game told in Inupiat with English subtitles. Because the game is based in the Arctic, our team made numerous visits to Barrow under Tara's sponsorship and guidance and the results of this inclusive development process are nothing short of marvelous. We are proud to say the game has sold more than 3 million copies and received several prestigious awards, including the British Academy Television Award.

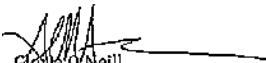
In addition, Tara has played a leadership role in one of the largest corporations in Alaska, which employs hundreds of Native and non-Native employees. This experience has given her deep understanding of the energy and development sectors and their importance to Alaska and the nation's economies. She understands and appreciates the value of development and the unique challenges of rural Native populations. She is very supportive of public-private partnerships to stretch limited federal resources. She understands the high cost of living in remote rural Alaska and on the reservations.

Tara is well respected and as demonstrated by her leadership in improving AFN described above, knows how to build coalitions and lead teams to accomplish directions set by the Administration. She will provide excellent advice and counsel to the Secretary of Interior and the White House based on her strong background and knowledge of promoting Alaska Native issues, cultural values, and economic sustainability.

Tara's experience gives her a deep understanding of Native affairs at the local, regional and national level. She knows her way around the board room, the mayor's office, the state and federal legislatures and is firmly connected to making a difference. She will be an outstanding addition to the Administration and an effective leader on behalf of the Native people of our country.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or require additional information. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

  
Gloria O'Neill  
President/CEO

Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
 United States Senate  
 522 Hart Senate Office Building  
 Washington, D.C. 20510



February 9, 2017

Honorable Dan Sullivan  
 United States Senate  
 702 Hart Senate Office Building  
 Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Support for Tara Katuk Sweeney Assistant Secretary, Indian Affairs U.S. Department of Interior

Dear Senators Murkowski and Sullivan:

On behalf of Doyon, Limited (Doyon), I am writing to express our enthusiastic support for the appointment of Tara Sweeney for Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs, for the Department of the Interior. Doyon is one of the thirteen Native regional corporations established by Congress under the terms of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). Headquartered in Fairbanks, Doyon has more than 18,500 shareholders, many of whom reside in remote villages with few economic opportunities. Doyon is the largest private landowner in Alaska, with a land entitlement under ANCSA of more than 12.5 million acres. Doyon's mission is to promote the economic and social well-being of its shareholders and future shareholders, to strengthen its Native way of life, and to protect and enhance its land and resources.

Doyon has worked with Tara for many years on several issues affecting Alaska Natives and American Indians. In particular, I had the pleasure of working closely with Tara, her employer Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC) and Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI) on a package of reforms to the Small Business Administration's (SBA) 8(a) program as applied to Alaska Native Corporations. The effort, which lasted between 2009 and 2012, resulted in the SBA adopting eight of the nine major categories of reform proposed by Doyon, ASRC and CIRI. Tara played a huge and active role in that effort.

We at Doyon also had the pleasure of working with Tara when she served as Co-Chair of the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN). At that time, AFN undertook a membership reorganization, redrafting of bylaws and other significant changes which Tara helped lead.

Tara has also served as Chair of the Arctic Economic Council for the last two years. In that role, she has led many of our nation's efforts to form international arctic policy as it relates to economic development. As the arctic is a rapidly developing area of the world, it was critical to have U.S. leadership and Tara helped provide it.

In short, Tara is a dedicated, hard-working and fearless leader willing to take on important issues of local, national and international significance. Tara will bring these attributes to the Assistant Secretary position. Doyon offers its unqualified support for Tara's appointment.

If we can provide additional information, please contact us.

Sincerely,

Aaron M. Schutt  
 President and CEO  
 Doyon, Limited



**Copper River Native Association**  
(AHTNA' T'AENE NENE')

**Board of Directors**

February 17, 2017

Sent Via Electronic Mail

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senate  
522 Senate Hart Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Daniel Sullivan  
United States Senate  
702 Senate Hart Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Don Young  
United States House of Representatives  
2314 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for Tara Katuk Sweeney Department of Interior, Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs

Dear Representative Young,

On behalf of the Ahtna T'aene Nene' (Copper River Native Association) Board of Directors, I am writing to convey our unreserved support for Tara Sweeney as the Department of Interior's Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs. Copper River Native Association includes five compacted tribes of the Ahtna region, including Kluti-Kaah, Tuzlina, Gakona, Gulkana, and Cantwell. Our Promise Statement is to, inspired by our cultural values, provide exceptional health services, child and youth development, and life-enhancing resources to empower all people in our region to thrive in every stage of life, from treasured infant to honored elder.

Ms. Sweeney understands Native communities and rural America's sectors in regards to thriving sustainable communities in the economic development and energy sectors. Tara brings a unique skill set to this position that will benefit all Natives throughout the United States. Tara served as the Alaska Federation of Native's board member and co-chair, as well as with Arctic Slope Regional Corporation. These experiences give her a strong understanding of Native affairs from the local to national level. Her work will serve as a benefit to the Administration and Native tribes of the United States.

We believe that Ms. Sweeney will bring capable experience to the position and remain committed to the people of the United States.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charlene Nollner", written over a horizontal line.

Ms. Charlene Nollner  
President, Board of Directors



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Donald Trump  
President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

March 15, 2017

Dear Mr. President:

I am proud to support Ms. Tara MacLean Sweeney's potential role as Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs (AS-IA) in the Department of Interior. Ms. Sweeney currently serves as Executive Vice President of Legislative and External Affairs for Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC) and is responsible for all facets of the corporation's government relations and communications. By way of quick background, ASRC is the largest locally-owned and operated business in Alaska, with approximately 13,000 Inupiat Eskimo (Alaskan Native) shareholders and more than 12,000 employees stretching across Alaska and the Lower 48 states.

I have known Tara in a personal and professional capacity for more than 30 years and can personally attest to the integrity of her character, her passion in building consensus on behalf of Native interests, and her lengthy track record of success.

Ms. Sweeney has formulated and advocated for changes in State and Federal policy, changes that have positively impacted the lives of rural Arctic Alaskans and the State of Alaska as a whole. Her advocacy has brought the Native people of Alaska together with tribes of the Lower 48 states on issues ranging from Indian economic development to government contracting to the development of broadband communication and other vital infrastructure. Ms. Sweeney has walked the halls of Congress and has testified in countless House and Senate hearings on behalf of Native American people.

In addition to her internal posting at ASRC, Ms. Sweeney has served her home state and country through her work as co-Chair of the Alaska Federation of Natives (2013-2014) and her most recent role as Chair of the internationally active Arctic Economic Council (AEC) (2015-present). At the AEC, Tara represents the business interests of the Arctic nations (the United States, Canada, Greenland/Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia), as well as numerous Indigenous Permanent Participants. In her capacity as Chair, Ms. Sweeney has illuminated the needs of Arctic


communities and highlighted the best practices of circum-Arctic business leaders. In her role, Tara has the attention of the ambassadors and foreign ministers of the Arctic nations as well as a wider circle of related international interests.

In the U.S., strengthening the federal government's relationship with Indian Country is vital, which is why I am so passionate about Tara's potential role as AS-IA. Sweeney has spent her adult life promoting self-determination for Alaska Natives. She has forged policies which empower Native American people to develop their own lands and refine their own energy resources — as well as protect the cultural needs of a people that remain unchanged through time. She has earned a reputation for being an effective advocate for balanced Native American policy. As her own Statement of Qualifications shows, Tara comes to the task at the Department completely and extraordinarily prepared.

Tara Sweeney is on very familiar terms with the rest of the Alaska Congressional delegation, and I am sure you will find a vote of confidence in Tara's abilities from them as well. She, along with her husband Kevin Sweeney, are raising two school-age children (high school and college), and all are familiar with our nation's capital as both Tara and her husband have found need to be stationed in Washington DC at various times during their careers. In short, Tara brings a refreshing outside perspective but also knows her way around the Beltway.

Let me congratulate you once again on the successful election and transition in Washington. If you have any questions regarding my recommendation of Ms. Sweeney please don't hesitate to contact me directly. As you can see, I value Ms. Tara Sweeney highly and endorse her with full confidence in her potential to serve her people and her country at the highest level.

Sincerely,



DON YOUNG  
Congressman for All Alaska

MARCH 12, 2018

Ed McDonnell,  
Alternate Designated Agency Ethics Official,  
U.S. Department of the Interior,  
Washington, DC.

Dear Mr. McDonnell:

The purpose of this letter is to describe the steps that I will take to avoid any actual or apparent conflict of interest in the event that I am confirmed for the position of Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs of the Department of the Interior.

As required by 18 U.S.C. § 208(a), I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter in which I know that I have a financial interest directly and predictably affected by the matter, or in which I know that a person whose interests are imputed to me has a financial interest directly and predictably affected by the matter, unless I first obtain a written waiver, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1), or qualify for a regulatory exemption, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(2), or statutory exemption, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(4). I understand that the interests of the following persons are imputed to me: any spouse or minor child of mine; any general partner of a partnership in which I am a limited or general partner; any organization in which I serve as officer, director, trustee, general partner or employee; and any person or organization with which I am negotiating or have an arrangement concerning prospective employment.

Upon confirmation, I will resign from my position with the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation. Following my departure, the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation will



issue me payments pursuant to the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation Employee Incentive Program and the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation Long-Term Incentive Plan. I will not accept any such payments and will forfeit them unless I receive those amounts before I assume the duties of the position of Assistant Secretary- Indian Affairs. For a period of two years from the date on which I receive these payments, I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter involving specific parties in which I know the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation is a party or represents a party, unless I first receive a written waiver pursuant to C.F.R. § 2635.503 (c).

I recently resigned my position with the Arctic Economic Council and the Ted Stevens Foundation. For a period of one year after my resignation from each of these entities, I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter involving specific parties in which I know that entity is a party or represents a party, unless I am first authorized to participate, pursuant to 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502(d).

I presently own inherited shares in the Ukpeagvik Inupiat Corporation. Within 90 days of my confirmation, I will divest these shares by transferring them to my non-minor, dependent children. Until I complete the transfer of these shares, I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter that to my knowledge has a direct and predictable effect on the financial interests of the Ukpeagvik Inupiat Corporation, unless I first obtain a written waiver, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1), or qualify for a regulatory exemption, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(2), or statutory exemption, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(4). Once the shares have been transferred, I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter involving specific parties that to my knowledge is likely to have a direct and predictable effect on the financial interests of the Ukpeagvik Inupiat Corporation, unless I am first authorized to participate, pursuant to 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502(d).

I will request a written waiver pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1) regarding my inherited financial interest in the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation. Until I have obtained such a waiver, I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter that to my knowledge has a direct and predictable effect on the financial interests of this entity.

If I have a managed account or otherwise use the services of an investment professional during my appointment, I will ensure that the account manager or investment professional obtains my prior approval on a case-by-case basis for the purchase of any assets other than cash, cash equivalents, investment funds that qualify for the exemption at 5 C.F.R. § 2640.201 (a), or obligations of the United States.

If I am confirmed as Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs of the Department of the Interior, I am aware that I am prohibited by 30 U.S.C. § 1211 (f) from holding a financial interest in any surface or underground coal mining operation. Additionally, I am aware that my position is subject to the prohibitions against holding any financial interest in federal lands or resources administered or controlled by the Department of the Interior extended to me by supplemental regulation 5 C.F.R. § 3501.103.

I understand that as an appointee I will be required to sign the Ethics Pledge (Exec. Order no. 13 770) and that I will be bound by the requirements and restrictions therein in addition to the commitments I have made in this ethics agreement.

I will meet in person with you during the first week of my service in the position of Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs of the Department of the Interior in order to complete the initial ethics briefing required under 5 C.F.R. § 2638.305. Within 90 days of my confirmation, I will document my compliance with this ethics agreement by notifying you in writing when I have completed the steps described in this ethics agreement.

I have been advised that this ethics agreement will be posted publicly, consistent with 5 U.S.C. § 552, on the website of the U.S. Office of Government Ethics with ethics agreements of other Presidential nominees who file public financial disclosure reports.

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RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. JOHN HOEVEN TO  
TARA MAC LEAN SWEENEY

### **Tribal Colleges and Universities**

*Question 1.* Thirty-five Tribal Colleges and Universities receive funding from the Department of the Interior. These colleges are recognized as catalysts in their communities, both in terms of higher education access and economic development.

If confirmed, how would you support and use Tribal Colleges to create economic opportunity and jobs in Indian Country?

Answer. Education is crucial to creating and fostering economic opportunities across Indian country. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the BIE Director to assess the existing needs within our tribal colleges and universities and consulting with tribes to determine how best to support these entities.

#### **Indian Land Fractionation**

*Question 2.* As part of the *Cobell* Settlement, \$1.9 billion was set aside for the Land Buy-Back Program. This program was designed to purchase fractional interests in trust or restricted Indian land from willing sellers at fair market value to reduce the amount of fractionated Indian land. The program is set to end in November, 2022.

In recent briefings for the Committee by Interior officials, the officials have indicated that the issue of fractionated Indian interests will continue to exponentially increase after the program ends.

If confirmed, how would you address fractionated lands, once the Land Buy-Back Program ends?

Answer. I understand fractionated interests are a deterrent to economic development opportunities across Indian country. If confirmed, I look forward to being briefed on the current status of the program. Robust tribal consultation will be crucial in determining any path forward.

#### **Safety at BIE Schools**

*Question 3.* In 2016, the Assistant Inspector General for the Department of the Interior sent a memo to the then-acting Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) Director, regarding the quality of measures in place at BIE schools to prevent violence against both students and staff from internal and external threats.

In their reviews, they found that there is no guidance for required safety measures at BIE schools.

If confirmed, how would you ensure that these schools are safe?

*Question 3a.* Will you commit to ensuring that the BIE will adopt all measures needed to ensure that children are safe at these schools?

Answer. I strongly believe that students within the BIE system should have access to safe learning environments. I am committed to ensuring our schools are safe from threats and violence. If confirmed as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, I will make it a priority to be briefed on the status of implementing the OIG's recommendations and will consult with tribes to ensure these measures meet the needs of both students and staff.

As part of its recommendations in its 2018 Report, the Department of the Interior Office of Inspector General suggests that there should be more oversight of tribally-operated schools, when it comes to ensuring the safety and security of students. The 2018 Report states:

“BIE Budget and Finance, whose grant specialists conduct reviews of tribally controlled schools, does not have clear guidelines regarding oversight roles and responsibilities because BIE leadership has not created long-term guidance.”

*Question 3b.* Will you commit to being personally involved and support the BIE in improving administration, oversight, fiscal responsibility and other management components as recommended by the Office of Inspector General or as needed to address the educational needs of Indian children?

Answer. Yes.

#### **Indian Gaming**

*Question 4.* The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act sets forth standards and requirements for tribal gaming on Indian lands. For example, the Secretary of the Interior reviews and makes decisions on tribal-state compacts. It also authorizes the compacts to go into effect, under certain circumstances, to the extent it is consistent with federal law. In some cases, it is silent on certain matters such as revenue sharing in tribal-state compacts.

These compacts represent negotiations between tribes and states. However, tribes have expressed concerns that revenue sharing creates an unfair bargaining position for tribes.

If confirmed, how will you balance state and tribal interests in reviewing tribal-state compacts?

Answer. I am committed to following the law as set forth by the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act. Tribal consultation and state and local engagement are key components of the law. If confirmed, I will take a balanced approach through tribal consultation, stakeholder engagement, assembling necessary data, and providing that

information to the leadership of the Department to ensure that we make can make informed decisions with all available information.

### **Tribal Relations**

*Question 5.* At times, Indian tribal interests may conflict with other tribes' interests. This conflict often arises in land-into-trust applications.

If confirmed, how will you reconcile tribal interests when there is a conflict?

Answer. If confirmed, my role as Assistant Secretary is to advocate for self-determination policies on behalf of Indian country. That also includes balancing aligned and conflicting tribal interests. Taking a balanced approach through local engagement and tribal consultation is the cornerstone of self-determination.

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RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. RICHARD BLUMENTHAL TO  
TARA MAC LEAN SWEENEY

*Question 1.* The federal courts have long recognized a unique trust relationship between the Federal Government in general—and the Department of the interior in particular—and federally recognized Indian Tribes. How would you characterize that relationship?

Answer. As an Alaska Native, I recognize the federal government's relationship with tribes is rooted in its responsibility to promote tribal sovereignty and self-determination. If confirmed, my role as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs is to be an advocate for Indian country, and uphold the trust responsibility the Federal Government has to tribes. Consultation is a critical part of our government-to-government relationship and a responsibility I take seriously.

*Question 2.* Regarding this trust status, in a situation where the Department of the Interior has to make a decision that would either assist the economic position of a Tribe or assist the economic development of a private entity, how would you balance those interests?

Answer. If confirmed, my role as Assistant Secretary is to advocate for self-determination policies on behalf of Indian country. That also includes balancing aligned and conflicting interests. Taking a balanced approach through local engagement and tribal consultation is the cornerstone to self-determination.

*Question 3.* What is your view of the recent revisions to the federal recognition of Indian Tribes regulations? Do you see any need to improve the current administrative process for reviewing recognition petitions? If so, how?

Answer. I have not been briefed on how the changes to the federal recognition process in 2015 have improved or hindered ongoing tribal recognition efforts. If confirmed, I commit to evaluating and assessing the overall process.

*Question 4.* What is your position regarding the *Carcieri* decision? Do you support legislation to overturn that U.S. Supreme Court decision?

Answer. The Department is bound by the decisions of the Supreme Court. As I am not at the Department, I cannot provide an official position on legislation. I respect the role of the Congress, which has the plenary authority over Indian Affairs matters, and appreciate its power to legislate on matters pertaining to Indian country.

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RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. MARIA CANTWELL TO  
TARA MAC LEAN SWEENEY

*Question 1.* Last December Congress passed a controversial provision to open up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil and gas development. I understand you have a long history of lobbying for Arctic Refuge drilling, including being employed as the executive vice president of the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation. I further understand you are a shareholder in the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation's oil and gas development interests within the Arctic National Refuge.

Ms. Sweeney, if confirmed as Assistant Secretary, will you resign your job with the Corporation and will recuse yourself from participation in any matters involving the Corporation for two years?

Answer. Yes.

*Question 1a.* Ms. Sweeney, during your testimony before the Senate Indian Affairs Committee you indicated that you would not request a written waiver from federal conflict of interest law which would otherwise allow you to participate in matters affecting your inherited financial interest in the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, is that accurate?

Answer. The financial interest for which I will request a limited waiver under 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1)—my inherited Class A shares in ASRC—is identical to a financial interest—my Class C shares in ASRC—that Congress has explicitly exempted from the prohibitions of 18 U.S.C. § 208 in 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(4). Due to the lack of clarity regarding the applicability of the 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(4) exemption to my inherited Class A shares and as set forth in my Ethics Agreement, I will request a limited waiver so that my inherited Class A shares will be treated the same as my Class C shares in the ASRC. Even if this limited waiver is granted, I will be restricted from participating in particular matters at the Department in which the ASRC is a specific party.

It is important as a threshold matter to note that Alaska Native Corporation (ANC) shares are unlike shares of publicly traded companies. One cannot simply divest and reacquire ANC shares. Congress has recognized the unique status of these interests by creating a statutory exemption in 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(4) from financial conflict of interest laws for interests in certain ANC shares. This exemption reflects the fact that it is fundamentally unfair to expect an entire class of indigenous Americans, and in this instance, me specifically, to divest a birthright which I am lawfully permitted to have, in order to serve the American public.

I currently own Class C shares in the ASRC. These shares were issued to me upon my enrollment in ASRC based on my status as a citizen of the United States who is of one-fourth degree or more Alaska Indian (including Tsimshian Indians not enrolled in the Metlaktla Indian Community) Eskimo, or Aleut blood, or combination thereof; who was born after December 18, 1971 to a parent who had been enrolled pursuant to ANCSA in the Arctic Slope Region of Alaska; and who was, at the time of issuance, a resident of the United States. As set forth in 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(4), my Class C Shares in the ASRC qualify for a statutory birthright exemption from the financial conflict of interest prohibition of 18 U.S.C. § 208(a). Under this exemption, I am prohibited from participating in particular matter at the Department in which the ASRC is a specific party.

I also currently own Class A shares in the ASRC, which I inherited from my mother and grandmother. While the 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(4) exemption applies to my Class C shares, the applicability of this exemption to my Class A shares is unsettled, because those shares were acquired via inheritance from my mother and grandmother. As a result, I will request a limited waiver so that my inherited Class A shares will be treated the same as my Class C shares in the ASRC, and, even if this limited waiver is granted, I will be restricted from participating in particular matters at the Department in which the ASRC is a specific party.

*Question 2.* Not all Alaska Natives are shareholders in the Arctic Regional Corporation and not all support oil and gas drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. If confirmed as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, you will be responsible for representing the best interests of all Alaska Natives, not just those of one Regional Corporation.

Ms. Sweeney, how will you balance the quality of life interests of the Gwich'in, who depend upon the caribou herds that migrate to the coastal plain for their traditional way of life, against those of the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, which seeks the economic benefits of oil and gas development?

Answer. If confirmed, my role as Assistant Secretary is to advocate for self-determination policies on behalf of Indian country. That also includes balancing aligned and conflicting tribal interests. Taking a balanced approach through local engagement and tribal consultation is cornerstone to self-determination. In this specific instance, it means consultation with the respective Gwich'in tribal governments in addition to the Native Village of Kaktovik traditional government.

*Question 2a.* Ms. Sweeney, how do you think an oil spill on Corporation lands in the fragile North Slope tundra would adversely impact the birthright of future Alaska Natives?

Answer. The North Slope is the region where my family and larger Ifiupiat community have traversed, survived, and thrived for thousands of years. This region defines who I am as a person and my people have a deep connection to the land and environment. My people also have a long history with oil, specifically when my great-grandfather discovered natural oil seeps near Smith Bay in the early 1920s and shared that discovery with the Federal Government.

To understand my answer, it is important to understand the rationale behind the answer. When oil was first discovered in my home region, the North Slope, the people of the North Slope or Arctic Slope, opposed development. Despite this opposition, the Federal government continued to carve out large swaths of land and leasing areas—creating oil and gas enclaves on federal and what would become state lands.

Faced with an imposed reality by the federal government, North Slope leaders recognized that if we were not an organized people, development would happen to us, despite us. Ergo, our fight for self-determination. Early leadership fostered the school of thought that nothing happens to us without us. That philosophy has guided our region since the first discovery of oil on the North Slope.

As a result, we incorporated our county form of government, the North Slope Borough, to ensure we protected our traditional and cultural practices, including our access to fish, wildlife, and marine mammals. Often times the home-rule North Slope Borough, through its planning, zoning, and permitting powers, raised the environmental compliance standards above the federal threshold. Our local and regional businesses implemented capacity building measures with our residents to ensure that if there was an incident related to development, our people were the first responders. Who better to respond to ensure protection and access to local food sources than those dependent upon those sources? Commitment to safety is part of our traditional and business cultures.

Through the resiliency of the people of the North Slope and capacity throughout our communities, there are sufficient safeguards and protective measures and practices in place to ensure the perpetuation and care of the land that defines us, regardless of land title or ownership.

*Question 2b.* Ms. Sweeney, given your background promoting controversial resource extraction projects such as drilling the Arctic Refuge, support the Pebble Mine in Bristol Bay, and continuing the Donlin Gold Mine, all of which pit different tribal interests against each other, how will you as Assistant Secretary represent and balance the needs of all impacted tribes?

Answer. My professional background and duties to ASRC are rooted in advocacy of self-determination. To paint those efforts with a broad brush for development projects in Alaska is inaccurate. To the extent that Indian Affairs has jurisdiction over development projects, I will follow the law. If projects are outside my jurisdiction but impact tribal and/or competing tribal interests, my role as Assistant Secretary, if confirmed, is to take a balanced approach through tribal consultation, stakeholder engagement, assembling necessary data and providing that information to the leadership of the Department to ensure the agency or department of jurisdiction can make an informed decision.

*Question 2c.* Ms. Sweeney, we also understand that there are lease agreements for ASRC lands in the Arctic Refuge with BP and Chevron/Texaco. Again, to make sure that we understand the potential conflicts that could come into play with any BIA work related to these companies, please describe the details of these lease agreements and whether you think any of these arrangements will require you to recuse yourself from any matter that potentially involves BP or Chevron.

Answer. The details of those arrangements are proprietary and the intellectual property of ASRC. Therefore, I do not have access to this information. I will comply with my ethics agreement and consult with OGE and/or DAEO on appropriate matters that may arise outside my agreement.

*Question 3.* For the last 15 years, I have been working with the Spokane Tribe to get the *Spokane Tribe of Indians of the Spokane Reservation Equitable Compensation Act* signed into law. This bill would provide the Tribe just and equitable compensation for the thousands of acres that were lost when the Grand Coulee Dam was constructed in the 1930s. The legislation is non-controversial, has passed out of this Committee almost every Congress and has passed both the House and the Senate, but unfortunately, not at the same time.

The Tribe has made significant sacrifices to get the bill across the finish line. This is why I was thrilled to hear Secretary Zinke visited the Spokane Tribe and pledged to support compensation for the Tribe. His exact words were “I support getting to a conclusion on this” and “This is one area where Maria Cantwell and I can work together.”

Ms. Sweeney, do you support the Secretary’s Statement?

*Question 3a.* Ms. Sweeney, currently, the Department of Interior is working with the Department of Justice to determine if the Spokane Tribe of Indians of the Spokane Reservation Equitable Compensation Act qualifies as an Indian water rights claim in accordance to the letter sent to Attorney General Sessions and Secretary Zinke by House Natural Resources Chairman Bishop on April 27, 2017. It is critical this process is completed expeditiously. Can you assure me that you will support this process moving forward expeditiously?

Answer. I am not familiar with the bill or the Secretary’s statements but understand its importance to both you and the Spokane Tribe. If confirmed, I commit to learning more and will work with you, the Congress, and the Department on this matter.

*Question 4.* Many tribes in Alaska and across the country are experiencing negative impacts from climate change. These range from changes in subsistence and wildlife patterns, to coastal erosion forcing community relocation in Alaska, and droughts in the southwest.

Ms. Sweeney, what do you see as BIA's role in the broader conversation about climate change?

*Question 4a.* Ms. Sweeney, how important is it in your view that DOI or any federal agencies take into account traditional ecological knowledge into its decision-making?

*Question 4b.* Ms. Sweeney, if tribes are opposed to actions that the federal government is taking, including actions regarding public lands, how will you help them have a meaningful voice and roll in any processes and accurately carry their message to the administration?

Answer. As I indicated at the hearing, my role as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs will be to support tribal sovereignty and self-determination and be an advocate for Indian country. Tribal consultation will be essential in determining how best to meet the varying needs of individual tribes across the country.

*Question 5.* A number of Tribes from Washington state and around the country have expressed concern over the Department of Interior's review of fee-to-trust regulations (25 C.F.R. 151). My tribal constituents fear that the Department's proposal will make it increasingly difficult for tribal nations to restore their homelands and place land into trust status.

Ms. Sweeney, what is your understanding of the fee-to-trust process?

*Question 5a.* Ms. Sweeney, if nominated, will you review the actions the Department of Interior has taken thus far to revise the process?

*Question 5b.* Ms. Sweeney, how will you and the Department consult with Tribes on potential changes to the fee-to-trust process?

Answer. I am generally aware of the Department's process for taking lands into trust. Because I am not at the Department, however, I have not briefed on any proposed changes to the Part 151 regulations. If confirmed, I will commit to learning more about this issue and look forward to consulting with tribes on this important responsibility.

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RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. TOM UDALL TO  
TARA MAC LEAN SWEENEY

**Ethics**

*Question 1.* Your Ethics Agreement states that “[i]f I am confirmed as Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs of the Department of the Interior, I am aware that I am prohibited by 30 U.S.C. § 1211(f) from holding a financial interest in any surface or underground coal mining operation” (emphasis added). 30 U.S.C. § 1211(f) provides that “[n]o employee of the Office (of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement) or any other Federal employee performing any function or duty under this chapter shall have a direct or indirect financial interest in underground or surface coal mining operations” (emphasis added). Your signed agreement only indicates that you are aware of the federal prohibition, but it does not indicate how you will comply with it.

a. Please attest that you will comply with 30 U.S.C. § 1211(f) if confirmed to the position of Assistant Secretary.

b. Please explain how you will comply with 30 U.S.C. § 1211(f) if confirmed as Assistant Secretary.

c. Please provide the rationale used by the Office of Government Ethics (“OGE”) or your Designated Agency Ethics Official to determine your Ethics Agreement complies with 30 U.S.C. § 1211(f).

Answer. My Ethics Agreement was reviewed and approved by the Alternate Designated Agency Ethics Official (DAEO) for the Department of the Interior and the Office of Government Ethics as compliant with applicable ethics requirements. I will comply with the requirements 30 U.S.C. § 1211(f) and its implementing regulations 30 C.F.R. Part 706, if confirmed to the position of Assistant Secretary, by working with the Departmental Ethics Office and recusing myself from performing any functions or duties under 30 U.S.C. Chapter 25.

*Question 2.* Your ethics agreement provides that “you will request a waiver pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1) regarding [your] inherited financial interest in the Arctic Regional Corporation” (emphasis added). That particular statutory waiver provides

that an employee may participate personally and substantially in a particular matter in which she has a financial interest if she receives “in advance a written determination made by such official that the interest is not so substantial as to be deemed likely to affect the integrity of the services which the Government may expect from such officer or employee.” Based on the Ethics Agreement’s citation to the waiver contained in 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1), it appears to set forth your intent to seek a waiver to participate in matters involving the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation.

a. Please attest that you will recuse yourself from all matters before the DOI related to the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (“ASRC”), if confirmed.

b. Please attest that you will recuse yourself from all matters before the DOI related to the ASRC oil and gas development in accordance with Sec. 20001 of Pub. L. No. 115–97, if confirmed.

c. Please attest that you will not seek a waiver in accordance with Section 208(b)(1) or any other relevant statutory or regulatory provision, if confirmed.

Answer. The financial interest for which I will request a limited waiver under 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1)—my inherited Class A shares in ASRC—is identical to a financial interest—my Class C shares in ASRC—that Congress has explicitly exempted from the prohibitions of 18 U.S.C. § 208 in 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(4). Due to the lack of clarity regarding the applicability of the 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(4) exemption to my inherited Class A shares and as set forth in my Ethics Agreement, I will request a limited waiver so that my inherited Class A shares will be treated the same as my Class C shares in the ASRC. Even if this limited waiver is granted, I will be restricted from participating in particular matters at the Department in which the ASRC is a specific party.

It is important as a threshold matter to note that Alaska Native Corporation (ANC) shares are unlike shares of publicly traded companies. One cannot simply divest and reacquire ANC shares. Congress has recognized the unique status of these interests by creating a statutory exemption in 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(4) from financial conflict of interest laws for interests in certain ANC shares. This exemption reflects the fact that it is fundamentally unfair to expect an entire class of indigenous Americans, and in this instance, me specifically, to divest a birthright which I am lawfully permitted to have, in order to serve the American public.

I currently own Class C shares in the ASRC. These shares were issued to me upon my enrollment in ASRC based on my status as a citizen of the United States who is of one-fourth degree or more Alaska Indian (including Tsimshian Indians not enrolled in the Metlaktla Indian Community) Eskimo, or Aleut blood, or combination thereof; who was born after December 18, 1971 to a parent who had been enrolled pursuant to ANCSA in the Arctic Slope Region of Alaska; and who was, at the time of issuance, a resident of the United States. As set forth in 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(4), my Class C Shares in the ASRC qualify for a statutory birthright exemption from the financial conflict of interest prohibition of 18 U.S.C. § 208(a). Under this exemption, I am prohibited from participating in particular matter at the Department in which the ASRC is a specific party.

I also currently own Class A shares in the ASRC, which I inherited from my mother and grandmother. While the 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(4) exemption applies to my Class C shares, the applicability of this exemption to my Class A shares is unsettled, because those shares were acquired via inheritance from my mother and grandmother. As a result, I will request a limited waiver so that my inherited Class A shares will be treated the same as my Class C shares in the ASRC, and, even if this limited waiver is granted, I will be restricted from participating in particular matters at the Department in which the ASRC is a specific party.

*Question 3.* On May 7, 2018, you provided the Committee with an update to your OGE Form 278e. The OGE 278e was final as of February 6, 2018. This update states that you received additional income from the ASRC in the amount of \$618,737 after February 6, 2018, as part of ASRC’s Employee Incentive Program and Long-Term Incentive Program.

a. Please describe the structure and purpose of the ASRC Employee Incentive Program and Long-Term Incentive Program, including information on which ASRC employees are eligible to participate in these programs and how frequently the programs provide monetary incentives of \$1,000+ to individual eligible employees.

b. Please list all monetary incentives you have received from ASRC under the Employee Incentive Program and Long-Term Incentive Program for the last three years.

c. Were the incentives listed in response to (b) reflected in the entries for “ASRC, Wages” you entered in your response to Question (G)(7) of the Committee’s Biographical and Financial Information Questionnaire?

i. If so, please indicate the portion of amounts labeled “ASRC, Wages” that were obtained as part of your annual salary and the portion obtained as part of the Employee Incentive Program and the Long-Term Incentive Program.

ii. If not, please explain your exclusion of these monetary incentives received under the Employee Incentive Program and the Long-Term Incentive Program.

d. Are you aware of any other ASRC employees who have received payments in excess of \$100,000 from ASRC under the Employee Incentive Program and the Long-Term Incentive Program? If so, would you describe such payments as common?

Answer. In response to questions a, b, and d, I have an employment non-disclosure agreement that prohibits me from disclosing proprietary information about ASRC. In response to question c, the incentives are specifically spelled out in my financial questionnaire under ‘wages.’

*Question 4.* Question (c)(4) of the Committee’s Biographical and Financial Information Questionnaire asks you to describe any activity “during the last 10 years in which you have engaged for the purpose of directly or indirectly influencing the passage, defeat, or modification of any legislation or affecting the administration and execution of law or public policy, regardless if you were a registered lobbyist.”

Your response provides a general overview of the types of activities you have engaged in as an ASRC employee during the 10 year period referenced in the question.

a. Please list any specific federal legislation or regulation upon which you have sought to directly or indirectly influence the passage, defeat, or modification of as a private citizen or in a professional capacity since 2015.

b. If confirmed, will you recuse yourself from any matters related to specific legislation, regulation, or Departmental policy for which you advocated on behalf of ASRC?

c. If confirmed, will you recuse yourself from any matters related to specific legislation, regulation, or Departmental policy for which ASRC, Ukpeagvik Inupiat Corporation, the Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope, or the Native Village of Barrow may hold an interest?

d. Are any members of your immediate family currently or previously registered as a Congressional lobbyist? If so, please detail the dates during which each individual was registered as a Congressional lobbyist, the name(s) of any organization/client for which each individual lobbied, and a description of the issues on which each individual lobbied Congress.

e. If you answered yes to (d) and you are confirmed, will you work with the Office of Government Ethics or your Designated Agency Ethics Official to ensure no conflicts of interest arise?

Answer. In responses to questions a through c, I will adhere to the terms of the ethics agreement that I signed and which has been provided to the Committee. Under the terms of that agreement, I will be restricted from participating in particular matters at the Department in which ASRC and Ukpeagvik Inupiat Corporation are specific parties, and I intend to actively consult with the Department’s Designated Agency Ethics Official to ensure compliance with that agreement, if confirmed.

In response to question d, none of my immediate family members are registered as a Congressional lobbyist; in the event this changes, I will commit to work the Department’s Ethics Office.

#### **Personnel Decisions**

*Question 5.* The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) recently confirmed that DOI, acting through its Executive Resources Board, agreed to move 35 staff members and ultimately reassigned 27 of its approximately 227 members between June 15 and October 29, 2017.<sup>1</sup> These reassignments have had a disproportionate impact on American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) employees, with 11 of the 35 transferred employees identifying as Native American. Some of these high-ranking AI/AN employees either come from, or formed significant connections over their years of service with, the communities in which they work.

a. If confirmed, what reassurances can you provide that future reassignments will not have a disproportionate impact on AI/AN employees?

<sup>1</sup> OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL. REPORT NO. 2017-ER-061, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR. REASSIGNMENT OF SENIOR EXECUTIVES AT THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR (April 2018), available at [https://www.doiig.gov/sites/doiig.gov/files/FinalEvaluation\\_SESReassignments\\_Public.pdf](https://www.doiig.gov/sites/doiig.gov/files/FinalEvaluation_SESReassignments_Public.pdf)



b. What would you do as Assistant Secretary to ensure DOJ consults with the communities most affected by disruptive employee reassignments prior to reassignment?

Answer. I am not at the Department and have not been briefed on any of the reassignments you mention. If confirmed as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, I will follow the law and Departmental policy on the reassignment of employees.

*Question 6.* The OIG found as a part of its review of DOI's reassignment of Senior Executive Service ("SES") employees that the majority of affected individuals (17 out of 27) questioned whether the SES reassignments were political, punitive, or related to their proximity to retirements. Of that majority, 12 SES individuals informed OIG that DOI may have targeted them due to their work on climate change, energy, or conservation. Some of these employees targeted for reassignment may remain under your supervision.

If confirmed, how will you protect employees in your ranks that may have policy disagreements with you and others above you?

Answer. My role as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs will be to engage the staff at the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Bureau of Indian Education to better understand the challenges and issues we face both internally and across Indian country. If confirmed, I will lead Indian Affairs according to our mission, which is ensuring the federal government is fulfilling its responsibility of sovereignty and self-determination.

*Question 7.* Recent news articles reported that three high-ranking DOI officials said that Secretary Zinke made several comments questioning the importance of a diverse workforce, saying "diversity isn't important," or "I don't care about diversity," or "I don't really think that's important anymore." Secretary Zinke disputes these reports.

What steps would you take as Assistant Secretary to ensure that DOI's workforce reflects the diversity of the people the Department serves, particularly as it applies to Indian Country?

Answer. I cannot speak to the matters you reference. However, if confirmed as Assistant Secretary, I will sit down with staff at the Department to better understand the internal challenges and issues we face. I want to discuss how to support employees, fill gaps, and reinvigorate our commitment to the mission, which is ensuring the federal government fulfills its trust responsibilities.

*Question 8.* It is well-established that DOI may give preference to AI/ANs when filling vacancies for jobs that provide services to AI/ANs. The basic goals of these Indian preference laws are clear: "to give Indians a greater participation in their own self-government; to further the Government's trust obligation toward the Indian tribes; and to reduce the negative effect of having non-Indians administer matters that affect Indian tribal life."<sup>2</sup>

If confirmed, will you follow well-established Indian hiring preferences in filling vacant positions within your purview (e.g., initial hiring, reassignment, transfer, competitive promotion, reappointment or reinstatement)?

Answer. If confirmed, I will follow all relevant laws that dictate matters pertaining to employees under my purview, including Indian preference.

#### **DOI Reorganization**

*Question 9.* Secretary Zinke proposes dividing DOI's Bureaus into 13 geographic regions across the country based on watersheds and other natural resource boundary lines. DOI's Fiscal Year 2019 budget request for the BIA included \$900,000 "to support the Department's migration to common regional boundaries to improve service and efficiency." Yet, at a recent Senate hearing to review DOI's Fiscal Year 2019 funding request and budget justification, Secretary Zinke stated that he is "not going to include the tribes unless they want to [be included in the reorganization]."

a. If confirmed, what will you do as Assistant Secretary to ensure that DOI conducts a robust consultation with all potentially affected tribes?

b. If confirmed, will you commit to carrying Indian Country's concerns to the highest levels of the federal government—not only Secretary Zinke but also the President?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to being briefed on the status of the Department's reorganization efforts, including plans to consult with tribes. As Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, my role is to be an advocate for Indian country. To me, this means engaging all levels of government on Indian country's needs.

<sup>2</sup>*Morton v. Mancari*, 41 7 U.S.535, 541–42 (1974) (citations omitted).

### Bureau of Indian Education

*Question 10.* In 2017, the Government Accountability Office added the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) to its “High Risk” list. BIE is undergoing a number of reforms related to this designation and as part of a reorganization begun under the previous DOI Secretary.

a. Please describe your familiarity with the BIE K–12 school system and outline the top three challenges that you believe face the Bureau.

b. If confirmed, how would you approach working with BIE officials, Tribes, BIE parents, BIE students, and other stakeholders to ensure any reform efforts suit the needs of federally-operated and tribally-operated BIE schools?

Answer. As stated at the hearing, my education was impacted when my village transitioned from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to a locally controlled school system. There are significant challenges within the Bureau of Indian Education that must be addressed immediately to begin improved service delivery for Indian students. Many of the recommendations in GAO’s High Risk report are common sense and common best practice in the private sector. The top three challenges include:

1. Commitment to safety: I strongly believe that students within the BIE system should not be condemned to an unsafe learning environment. It is inexcusable that our children and their teachers are in unsafe facilities and subjected to conditions that can be corrected with basic property management skills. This includes annual safety facility inspections, monitoring plan of safety inspections, and capacity building with staff to address safety deficiencies.

2. Clear strategic direction: Success and effectiveness in the private sector are driven by clear direction. Information highlighted by the GAO High Risk report illustrate a significant need for strategic management and capital asset plans, authority matrices, and workforce, quality control and financial analysis procedures. I am driven to build a team inside of BIE committed to execution of tactics necessary to remove this bureau from the high risk list.

3. Improved oversight: Identifying progress or success is contingent upon measurable factors and accountability. This includes effective oversight to ensure achievement of agency or bureau goals. Tightening up project controls, performance, and accountability measures will contribute to improved efficiencies and effectiveness of service deliver to our children.

*Question 11.* The BIE provides funding to a number of tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) and directly operates two institutions of higher education, the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institution and Haskell Indian Nations University.

Please describe your familiarity with TCUs and, if confirmed, how you would work with the BIE Director to support the missions of these institutions.

Answer. I am generally familiar with TCUs. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the BIE Director to assess the existing needs within our tribal colleges and universities and consulting with tribes to determine how best to support these entities.

*Question 12.* Reliable Internet connectivity remains a challenge for many K–12 and post-secondary schools in Indian Country.

If confirmed, how will you work with other federal agencies (e.g., the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Development Services and the Federal Communications Commission’s Universal Service Fund) to help schools on Indian lands access affordable state-of-the-art Internet connectivity?

Answer. As an Alaska Native, I understand firsthand the challenges Indian country faces in terms of access to broadband. As I indicated at the hearing, I am committed to breaking down silos across Departments and agencies in order to deliver much-needed services to Indian country, including the students we serve.

### Land into Trust

*Question 13.* The BIA testified before this Committee two weeks ago and provided some data on land into trust acquisitions. DOI’s witness testified that, since this Administration began in January 2017, the BIA has taken 16,000 acres of land into trust. And of 1,300 pending applications, less than 2 percent (21 applications) are for gaming purposes. Trust acquisitions are important tools for Indian and Alaska Native Tribes to restore tribal homelands. In fact, Alaska Native tribes are now eligible for these important trust acquisitions as a result of *Akiachak Native Cmty. v. Salazar*, 935 F. Supp. 2d 195, 210 (D.D.C. 2013).

a. Do you agree that trust acquisitions are important for restoring tribal homelands, including in Alaska?

b. What will you do as Assistant Secretary to continue land into trust acquisitions that appear to be stalled under this Administration?

Answer. I cannot comment on the current status of land into trust applications but will commit to learning more, if confirmed.

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RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO  
TO TARA MAC LEAN SWEENEY

*Question 1.* Nevada recently became one of several states to decriminalize recreational use of marijuana. Nevada tribes are interested in pursuing marijuana-related economic development with the State's support. In fact, some Nevada tribes have already invested significant capital in this business, providing income for the health and welfare for tribal members. How will you support tribal efforts to engage in marijuana-related economic development in Nevada?

Answer. If confirmed as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, I will make it a priority to consult with tribes, including those located in Nevada, on their individual economic development interests and needs.

*Question 2.* Both Secretary Zinke Interior and President Trump have questioned the designation of Gold Butte and Basin and Range National Monuments, both of which contain important tribal cultural resources in need of protection. How will you defend against Executive action proposing to diminish or eliminate these National Monuments? How will you guarantee tribes have a seat at the table when it comes to decisions, activities, and land management on and near their communities' lands?

Answer. While I am not at the Department and not briefed on any decisions relating to national monuments, I understand how important this issue is to you. I look forward to learning more, if confirmed.

*Question 3.* Taking lands into trust on behalf of the tribes is one of the most vital functions the Department undertakes. Recently, Department of Interior officials appear to be gearing up to change the fee-to-trust regulations (25 CFR Part 151), in particular for off-reservation trust acquisitions. Acquisition of land in trust is essential to tribal self-determination. Do you think that the Part 151 regulations need any changes? How would you ensure that any proposed changes fulfill the Indian Reorganization Act's goals "to provide land for Indians" and enable tribes to achieve and maintain self-support?

Answer. I am not at the Department and only generally aware of the details relating to proposed changes to Part 151 regulations. I am committed to following the law and will look forward to learning more, if confirmed.

*Question 4.* The Department of the Interior's FY 2019 budget justification includes almost \$18 million to begin the process of reorganization of the Department of the Interior along 13 different regional offices, yet the Department has provided little information to Congress and very little organized tribal consultation. Can you describe what you consider appropriate tribal consultation? How will Tribes factor into the process and what benefits do you expect they will see from this process?

Answer. While I cannot speak to the Department's reorganization plans, if confirmed, I will work diligently to uphold the federal government's trust responsibility to tribes. I place a high premium on consultation and if confirmed, I am committed to bringing people together and breaking down silos to ensure I have the information I need to make the right decisions. I stand ready and willing to work on behalf of all Native people.

*Question 5.* Nevada does not have significant amounts of natural gas, oil, or coal production, but energy produced by solar and geothermal has been a major boon to the diversification of our economy, and has provided clean energy for Nevadans and throughout the west. In my state, many of the Indian tribes have plans to expand businesses on reservations in order to provide jobs for their members—some of this business activity includes opening their land to renewable energy projects. What do you intend to do to be helpful for Indian Country, and tribes in my state, who are looking to diversify their economy through clean energy investments?

Answer. I believe sovereignty is about self-determination and the role of Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs is to work with tribal leaders across Indian country on the priorities that are most important to them. If confirmed, I will work with tribes to ensure they have the tools necessary to exercise their rights and create economic opportunities that best fit their individual needs.