

Representative Rueben Gallego Emphasizes Need for Full UIO Facilities Funding

Category: Policy Blog

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Subcommittee on Indigenous Peoples of the United States Hearing: “Oversight Hearing on Examining Federal Facilities in Indian Country”.

On June 17, 2021, the Subcommittee on Indigenous Peoples of the United States Hearing: “Oversight Hearing on Examining Federal Facilities in Indian Country”. At the hearing Chair [Teresa Leger Fernandez](#) and Ranking Member [Don Young](#) Mr. Jason Freihage, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Management, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs; Mr. Randy Grinnell, Deputy Director for Management Operations, Indian Health Service; The Honorable Chief Allan, Chairman, Coeur d’Alene; The Honorable David Hill, Principal Chief, Muscogee Creek Nation; The Honorable Victoria Kitcheyan, Chairwoman, Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska; The Honorable Ned Norris Jr., Chairman, Tohono O’odham Nation; The Honorable Timothy Nuvangyaoma, Chairman, Hopi Tribe. The hearing comes as an oversight to facilities deterioration and the bureaucracy surrounding timely construction and funding and its impact in Native communities on and off the reservation.

Many committee members expressed over the inadequacies in the IHS priority construction planning process and overall compounding backlog of construction projects looming in Indian Country. In addition, Tribal leaders gave personal accounts of the overall devastating facilities conditions including unsafe school structures, to sanitation, and inability to provide basic clinical needs.

Rep. Rueben Gallego gave recognition to the IHS budget that includes a proposal to Urban Indian organizations to use their funds on renovation extra projects like other contractors, but stop short of full praise of the inclusion when directing questions to Mr. Randy Grinnell, Deputy Director for Management Operations, IHS to “expand the IHS proposal and explain why removing this restriction is necessary to allow UIOs to better serve their patients and passing legislation to just to enact the proposal” and “why language still exists as a restriction on UIOs today, when most no longer use the accreditation standard mentioned”? In response, Mr. Grinnell explained “in the past, up until now UIOs were not able to utilize funds from IHS related to any facility issues unless it had to do with accreditation through one of the accrediting bodies. Now there is proposed language in the 22 CJ that will help to address that issue, going forward. In addition, an urban confer is in place, where IHS receives input from those facilities on their needs”. Encouraged by Mr. Grinnell’s response Rep. Gallego went further to ask if “IHS feel positive about passing legislation to just to enact the proposal”? In response Mr. Grinnell stuttered in his explanation stating “he’s not exactly sure why the language for UIOs was included that way in the law, but he can only speculate that the drafters of that law did not have an understanding about the UIOs and their need. And referred the subcommittee to the IHS CJ on that issue for the FY22 President’s budget.” NCUIH along with 29 other Native organizations recently included this request in a [joint letter on infrastructure priorities](#), which also advocated for \$21 billion for Indian health infrastructure inclusive of UIOs.

[Watch Hearing Here](#)