

March 15: USET SPF Alert: NEEDED IMMEDIATELY: Tribal COVID-19 Legislative Proposals for Further Action

Dear USET SPF Board of Directors, USET Committees, and DC Tribal Reps,

As Congress seeks to respond to the rapidly evolving public health threat presented by COVID-19, multiple legislative packages have been drafted and more are anticipated. It is critical that Tribal Nations, our communities, and our economies are included in all preparedness, response, and relief measures taken by the legislative and executive branches. However, there has been little for Indian Country in recent emergency supplemental bills. H.R. 6074, *the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act*, which was signed into law on March 6th, contained \$40 million in set aside funds at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for Tribal Nations, Tribal organizations, and urban Indian organizations under HR 6074 for COVID-19 preparedness and response efforts. H.R. 6201, *the Families First Coronavirus Response Act*, which passed the House early Saturday morning, currently contains \$64 million in funding through the Indian Health Service (IHS) to be allocated at the discretion of the IHS Director, as well as confirmation that Native people eligible for services through the Purchased/Referred care program will not pay any type of cost-sharing when accessing a COVID-19 test.

With Indian Country already chronically underfunded and under-resourced, it is clear that much more must be done by the federal government to ensure we have the resources necessary to fight and recover from this pandemic. Congress is currently working on a third emergency supplemental package. Indian Country is being asked for proposals to address what the previous two supplemental bills overlooked. Things are moving swiftly and Congressional appropriators have asked for this information **TONIGHT**. USET SPF is supporting provisions that include Tribal access to the Public Health Emergency Fund, additional Purchased/Referred Care funding, flexible housing funds, nutrition support, economic/credit relief, and additional funding for the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Whenever possible, we are stressing to our Congressional allies the need to ensure that Tribal Nations are included in any resources provided to other units of government, but Congress is also seeking proposals that would benefit Indian Country specifically. We are reaching out to our membership for any additional legislative proposals that would provide short and near-term resources and relief for Tribal Nations. If you or your representation have suggestions for inclusion in the next or future COVID-19 legislative packages, please send those to me as soon as possible. Recommendations are being sent to the Hill **TONIGHT**.

We appreciate your attention to this message and everything you are doing to keep your communities safe.

Thank you,
Liz Malerba ~ *Citizen of the Mohegan Tribe*
Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs
United South and Eastern Tribes
Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF)
400 North Capitol Street, Suite 585
Washington, D.C. 20001

Office: 202-624-3550

Cell: 615-838-5906

Fax: 202-393-5218

www.usetinc.org

Because there is Strength in Unity