



USET

SOVEREIGNTY PROTECTION FUND

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Transmitted Electronically

August 5, 2022

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-221 U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Tribal Funding in Reconciliation Bill and Agreement Related to Streamlined Permitting

Dear Majority Leader Schumer,

We write on behalf of United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF) to urge an increase in direct funding for Indian Country and the addition of other Tribal provisions in the budget reconciliation bill, the *Inflation Reduction Act*. Despite an initial allocation of at least \$20.5 billion under earlier *Build Back Better Act* proposals, direct funding to Tribal Nations under the *Inflation Reduction Act* has been drastically reduced to as little as \$612.5 million. And although Tribal Nations are eligible for a much larger portion of total spending under the bill, given the large number of barriers that exist under these funding models, we expect access to this additional funding to be limited, at best. While we recognize that the *Inflation Reduction Act* is the product of lengthy negotiations with other members of your party and, as a result, represents a significant departure from *Build Back Better*, we ask that you prioritize your trust and treaty obligations as a federal official as this proposal moves forward.

USET SPF is a non-profit, inter-tribal organization advocating on behalf of thirty-three (33) federally recognized Tribal Nations from the Northeastern Woodlands to the Everglades and across the Gulf of Mexico.¹ USET SPF is dedicated to promoting, protecting, and advancing the inherent sovereign rights and authorities of Tribal Nations and in assisting its membership in dealing effectively with public policy issues

We know that through this reconciliation effort, the Administration and Congressional Democrats aim to leave a lasting legacy on America's physical, social, and economic landscape. Throughout this process,

¹ 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), Chickahominy Indian Tribe (VA), Chickahominy Indian Tribe—Eastern Division (VA), 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), Monacan Indian Nation (VA), Nansemond Indian Nation (VA), 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), Rappahannock Tribe (VA), 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), Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe (VA) and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) (MA).

Because there is Strength in Unity

Indian Country has consistently communicated [our pressing priorities](#) for funding and action under this agenda. While a small number of these have been addressed via the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* or appear in the current version *Inflation Reduction Act*, the vast majority continue to go unfunded. As you seek final passage and enactment of the *Inflation Reduction Act*, we urge you to consider the impacts of failing to fully include Tribal Nations and our citizens among the beneficiaries of long-term investments in the fabric of this country. This will only exacerbate centuries of unfulfilled obligations and broken promises, many of which have come into horrifyingly sharper focus as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We urge you to fight to ensure we are more meaningfully included in any final agreement, including working to incorporate a greater number of our funding priorities, such as those identified for inclusion in previous iterations of the reconciliation bill.

In addition, we note that a part of the agreement to bring the *Inflation Reduction Act* to the floor includes separate action on legislation to reform the federal infrastructure permitting process. As you may be aware, Tribal Nations have a significant role in this process as we seek to protect our cultural and sacred sites from disturbance and damage, as well as protect our people and environment. While we strongly support robust and strengthened national infrastructure, any infrastructure build-out, in Indian Country and beyond, must not occur at the expense of Tribal consultation, sovereignty, sacred sites, or public health. In examining summaries of Senator Manchin's proposal for permitting reform, one thing is clear: Tribal consultation is necessary before it can move forward. In recognition of your trust and treaty obligations to Tribal Nations, we ask that you ensure any permitting reforms receive thorough Tribal consultation before they are considered on the Senate floor.

Thank you for your attention to these matters.

Sincerely,



Kirk Francis
President



Kitcki A. Carroll
Executive Director