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United States Senate

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April 3, 2024

The Honorable Bryan Newland
Assistant Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington D.C. 20240

Dear Assistant Secretary Newland:

I write to you to address the tribal law enforcement crisis in the Great Plains Region. It has become clear that a lack of law enforcement personnel is contributing to the ongoing crime wave, and that recruiting and training appear to be root causes of this situation.

As you are well aware, tribal law enforcement leaders are struggling to hire and retain law enforcement officers in tribal communities. As you also know, several tribal law enforcement agencies in the Great Plains Region only employ a handful of officers. As a consequence, as few as two officers can be tasked with patrolling millions of acres during a shift. Criminal entities are taking advantage of these shortages and are distributing higher volumes of illegal drugs, including fentanyl.

It is my understanding the BIA requires the majority of tribal law enforcement officers to receive training at the U.S. Indian Police Academy in Artesia, New Mexico. In my recent discussions with Great Plains Region law enforcement leaders, it has become apparent that the distance to this academy is a recruitment barrier. With no basic federal training options for tribal law enforcement on the Great Plains, prospective officers are opting to work for local agencies or leave the law enforcement field altogether. This has been especially difficult for law enforcement in the Great Plains Region, which is home to some of the largest tribes in the nation. I have consulted with tribal leaders and believe that the possibility of opening a tribal law enforcement training facility in the Great Plains Region would address this issue.

In our consultation, I have become aware of several suitable, existing training facilities that could address the recruitment and training problem without significant cost. I believe that such an outcome would garner support from tribal leaders and result in the building of greater law enforcement capacity throughout the region. With the current situation in mind, I respectfully ask you to meet with me to discuss this issue.

Please contact members of my staff to coordinate such a meeting.

Sincerely,



M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator

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