

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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SELECT COMMITTEE ON
INTELLIGENCE
INDIAN AFFAIRS

May 12, 2025

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum,

Congratulations on your swift confirmation and thank you for your commitment to working with Indian Country.

As you know, tribal law enforcement leaders continue to struggle to hire and retain law enforcement officers. The majority of Great Plains tribal law enforcement agencies are understaffed, with as few as two officers tasked with patrolling millions of acres during a shift.

The officer shortage directly contributes to a growing tribal public safety crisis. This problem has especially impacted law enforcement in the Great Plains Region, which is home to some of the largest tribes in the nation. In recent years, some tribes have experienced violent crime rates five times the national average.

The current requirement to send prospective officers to the Indian Police Academy (IPA) directly impacts the tribal law enforcement workforce. Many tribal law enforcement leaders believe that the distance to this New Mexico facility is a barrier to recruitment. Rather than receive training at the IPA, many prospective officers are opting to attend local academies and work for non-tribal agencies.

While the majority of tribal officers are trained at the IPA, there is still some opportunity to expand local training options. It is my understanding tribal officers are able to attend a state police academy as long as they later complete a Bridge Training Program. Last summer, 13 tribal officer recruits attended a training session at the South Dakota Law Enforcement Training Center. This is an encouraging step, demonstrating the Great Plains Region could benefit from a permanent training option.

Many law enforcement leaders believe providing additional training options on the Great Plains could help build greater law enforcement capacity throughout the region. Therefore, I respectfully ask you work with Congress to identify a list of potential training sites. This could include existing law enforcement training centers that may have the capacity to expand their operations.

I look forward to working with you on this issue.



M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator