

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

June 12, 2023

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland:

We are writing to report to you that South Dakota's Indian reservations are witnessing a troubling deterioration in public safety. We therefore request that the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) coordinate with South Dakota tribal leaders to provide additional resources for tribal law enforcement agencies. This may include increased funding and manpower from the BIA to deliver improved law enforcement services on South Dakota's reservations.

According to crime statistics from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, South Dakota reservations have some of the highest violent crime rates in the nation. A shortage of law enforcement and detention officers on the reservations has contributed to the current situation in tribal communities. With low personnel numbers and a high number of calls for assistance, tribal law enforcement officers often struggle to respond to emergencies in a timely manner. In an attempt to address manpower issues, a number of tribal leaders have asked the BIA to either streamline law enforcement hiring processes or provide emergency supplemental funding.

While a significant number of tribal communities in South Dakota are dealing with an increase in serious crime, it is important to note the situation on each respective reservation is unique and requires individual attention. Therefore, we request the BIA closely evaluate tribal crime statistics and work directly with individual tribal leaders to address these threats to public safety. We understand that the BIA has successfully provided needed assistance to tribal law enforcement agencies in the past. If for some reason that is not possible now, we respectfully ask that the BIA search for any reasonable alternative to improve law enforcement services on South Dakota's reservations.

Without the BIA's immediate intervention, the safety of our tribal communities will continue to deteriorate. Thank you for your attention to this matter.


Sincerely,



JOHN THUNE
United States Senator



M. MICHAEL ROUNDS
United States Senator



DUSTY JOHNSON
Member of Congress