
November 15, 2023

The Honorable Harriet Hageman
Chair
Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs
Committee on Natural Resources
House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Teresa Leger Fernandez
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs
Committee on Natural Resources
House of Representatives
1332 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Hageman and Ranking Member Leger Fernandez:

With respect to the Subcommittee's November 14, 2023, hearing, Opportunities and Challenges for Improving Public Safety in Tribal Communities, attached please find Western Governors' Association policy resolutions 2023-09, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP), and 2024-04, Combating the Opioid Crisis.

The MMIP crisis is fueled by many complex and historic factors. Durable solutions must increase collaboration between state, tribal, and federal entities, including law enforcement and victim services resources. Western Governors support an increase in the pace of hiring for Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) tribal officers, equivalent funding for direct tribal police forces, and sufficient funding for tribal court and justice systems. Western Governors also support funding for BIA victim service advocates to ensure that victims and their families can navigate complex bureaucratic systems. Western Governors recognize diverse agreement opportunities exist, such as cross-deputization, joint powers agreements, and mutual aid agreements, to assist with the speed of law enforcement response and suit the variety of systems and scenarios across the West, and support efforts to share best practices.

The opioid epidemic has become one of the nation's most devastating and lethal public health and safety crises, and tribal communities are also negatively affected by substance use disorders, overdoses, and deaths. Combating the opioid crisis requires a comprehensive approach that reflects the complexity of the problem – from the potency and availability of illicit drugs to the social and economic damage that they impose – across all levels of government and the continuum of care. The Tribal Opioid Response program provides critical support for tribes to care for their members. Congress should continue to appropriate needed funding to this program and include ongoing support for polysubstance programming and initiatives.

I request that you include this document in the permanent record of the hearing, as it articulates Western Governors' collective and bipartisan policy positions and recommendations on this important issue. Thank you for your consideration. Please contact me if you have any questions or require further information.

Sincerely,



Jack Waldorf
Executive Director

Attachments (2)