

House Appropriations Public Witness Hearing

American Indian/ Alaska Native Hearing Day 1

[Morning Session](#) and [Afternoon Session](#)

7 May 2024

Highlights:

- Many witnesses spoke in support of:
 - Expanding 638 contracting authority
 - Tribal forest management
 - Water rights

General Notes:

Witnesses that spoke on Indian Tribal food and ag issues:

- [Whitney Gravelle](#)- President, [Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority \(CORA\)](#)
 - [Testimony](#)
 - Emphasized the importance of Treaty Rights, specifically for Hunting and fishing.
 - Insists that any budget request for Rights Protection Implementation (RPI) funds in FY 2025 must not be less than the amount allocated for FY 2024.
- [Henry Fox](#)- [White Earth Band of Ojibwe](#)
 - [Testimony](#)
 - Requested for funding to support 638 self-determination contracts in the FY 25 Interior budget.
 - White Earth Band of Ojibwe is seeking to regain management of their lands, and proposed a co-stewardship and co-management agreement with the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). They have communicated this to Secretary Deb Haaland and the congressional delegation, and are seeking funding in the FY 25 Interior Appropriations for a 638-self-determination contract with the USFWS. However, funding for such contracts with agencies other than the BIA is discretionary and subject to available appropriations.
- [Ervin Carlson](#)- President, [Inter-Tribal Buffalo Council](#)
 - [Testimony](#)
 - Ervin Carlson, President of the InterTribal Buffalo Council (ITBC), requested increased funding from various agencies for buffalo herd development, management partnerships, and scientific research. ITBC represents 84 Tribes with 55 buffalo herds and seeks \$17 million to address current funding inadequacies.
- [Frank Adams](#)- Chief, [Upper Mattaponi Tribe](#)
 - [Testimony](#)
 - The Upper Mattaponi Tribe requested 638-Self Determination Act funding from the BIA for their new judicial branch in September 2023. After the BIA redirected their

request, the Tribe applied again for funding in December 2023. However, in January 2024, the BIA Eastern Regional Office denied their request, stating that they lack a Tribal Court Program and funding. Instead, they advised the Tribe to seek additional funding appropriation specifically for judicial services programs in the BIA Eastern Region.

- [Thora Padilla- President, MESA CLERO Apache Tribe](#)
 - [Testimony](#)
 - “We support the IFMAT IV recommendations to increase BIA Tribal Forestry funding by \$96 million over FY’24 enacted levels, increase fire preparedness by \$42 million, and establish a separate budget line for Tribal forest roads to be funded at \$89 million/year. This funding would bring Indian forest funding closer to parity with federal forests... We urge the Subcommittee to include report language that will extend the TFPA authority throughout Forest Service and BLM lands to achieve landscape-scale management where the federal lands encompass land ceded to the United States by Treaty, are located within the boundaries of a current or former Reservation or are adjudicated to be Tribal homeland.”
- [Jeremy Takala- Councilmen, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation](#)
 - [Testimony](#)
 - Advocated for 638 expansions, specifically for their Appraisals Program
 - “The Yakama Nation Appraisals Program lacks sufficient resources to effectively manage an unwieldy appraisal workload. The Yakama Nation Appraisals Program is a federal trust function administered through federal contracts pursuant to Public Law 93-638, Indian Self-determination, and Education Assistance Act (“ISDEAA”). The federal Appraisal and Valuation Services Office (“AVSO”), like many ISDEAA contracts carried out by the Yakama Nation, is “638ed” for the Tribal government to carry-out necessary federal functions. The 638 contracts typically establish an organizational framework and performance standards and are supposed to provide the enough funding for the contracted Tribal department to perform the contracted federal function. Today, funding levels only provide for a single full-time appraiser whose workload is driven by requests made through offices operating under the Bureau of Indian Affairs (“BIA”).”
- [Charmaine McDarment- Chairperson, Tule River Indian Tribe](#)
 - [Testimony](#)
 - Highlights:
 - Advocated for [S. 306, the Tule River Tribe Reserved Water Rights Settlement Act of 2023](#)
 - Without sufficient water and infrastructure, the Tribe is forced to limit residency, impacting health and population growth. This scarcity also hinders food sustainability, economic development, education, and wildfire protection.

- Advocated for 638 contracting for Tribal Firefighting and Forest management
 - Stated the need for increased Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) funding for PL 93-638 contracts is vital for Tribal firefighting and wildfire management. The Tule River Reservation, facing recent wildfires, operates on a limited budget that doesn't cover necessary staffing needs. The Tribe urgently requires expanded funding to hire essential personnel, provide training, support severity funding, and acquire firefighting equipment. They explained that timely funding is crucial to safeguard reservation communities against future wildfires.