

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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APPROPRIATIONS
ARMED SERVICES
BANKING, HOUSING, AND
URBAN AFFAIRS
SELECT COMMITTEE ON
INTELLIGENCE
INDIAN AFFAIRS

March 20, 2025

The Honorable Pam Bondi
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

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

Dear Attorney General Bondi and Secretary Burgum,

Great Plains reservation communities are continuing to deal with a public safety crisis. With some tribes experiencing violent crime rates five times higher than the national average, it is clear that traditional law enforcement approaches alone are ineffective and officials will need to develop alternative solutions. Several tribal leaders have proposed establishing a cross jurisdictional commission to directly address violent crime. As tribal nations continue to deal with threats to public safety, I respectfully request both the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Department of the Interior (DOI) to prioritize and support this initiative.

As you are aware, an influx of narcotics trafficking has put a real strain on tribal law enforcement agencies. This problem presents not only a serious public health challenge, but it also directly contributes to violence in reservation communities. According to federal statistics, Great Plains reservations have disproportionately high rates of violent crime. In recent years, some tribal law enforcement agencies have received over 100,000 calls for assistance. Tribal leaders have indicated that despite their efforts, violent crime rates remain alarmingly high.

Tribal officer shortages have directly contributed to the current public safety crisis. Currently, several Great Plains law enforcement agencies are severely understaffed. Consequently, some tribal departments only have as few as two or three officers working each shift. This is especially concerning given that some Great Plains reservations span over one million acres. Insufficient training and hiring practices at the federal level have only exacerbated the current problem, making it clear that a joint effort between federal and tribal law enforcement is necessary to address the tribal officer shortage.

The U.S. trust and treaty responsibility requires both the DOJ and DOI to share criminal jurisdiction with tribal law enforcement. With this responsibility in mind, it is my hope DOJ and DOI will collaborate with tribes under federal jurisdiction to establish a "Violent Crime Reduction Commission."

Tribal leaders have expressed support for using a commission to directly deploy resources to tribal agencies in need. This may involve working directly with tribal leaders under federal jurisdiction to improve the current methods for disbursing key resources, including competitive

grant funding. As you know, extensive tribal consultation must be a key component of any effort to improve public safety.

Due to President Trump's dedication to fighting violent crime, I believe it is the right time for the federal government to reevaluate and strengthen tribal public safety programs. I look forward to working with both of you on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Michael Rounds". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator