



# The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation

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April 13, 2020

The Honorable Steven T. Mnuchin  
Secretary  
United States Department of the Treasury  
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20220

The Honorable Tara Sweeney  
Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs  
United States Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Mnuchin and Assistant Secretary Sweeney:

The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (“Colville Tribes”) strongly objects to any attempt to provide direct payments under Title V of Pub. L. 116-136, the “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act” (the “CARES Act”) to any Alaska Native regional or village corporations as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

As you know, Section 5001 of the CARES Act establishes a relief fund for States, Tribal governments, and local units of government. Section 5001 provides that “Indian tribe has the meaning given that term in section 4(e) of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304(e)), which is a broad definition that includes, among other entities, “any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act . . .” Section 5001 provides that the term “Tribal government” means the “recognized governing body of an Indian Tribe.”

The term “Indian tribe” is used only once in Section 5001. That reference provides that the amount paid to a Tribal government “shall be the amount the Secretary shall determine, in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior and Indian Tribes, that is based on increased expenditures of each such Tribal government . . .” All other references in Section 5001 are to “Tribal governments,” and the CARES Act makes clear that only “Tribal governments” are to be paid by Treasury.

Today, the Treasury Department released information on the web-based portal where Tribal governments will register to obtain the payments under Title V. That notice strongly implied that Alaska Native regional or village corporations as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act will be eligible for payments, despite not being considered a “Tribal government.” The Colville Tribes hopes that this was an oversight and, again, strongly objects to these corporations being considered a “Tribal government” for direct payment purposes.

The Colville Tribes fully endorses the views set forth in the April 13, 2020, letter to you from the National Congress of American Indians, and the Colville Tribes appreciates your consideration of these comments. Please feel free to contact me directly at any time by e-mail (Rodney.Cawston.cbc@colvilletribes.com) or cell phone (505) 879-9266.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rodney Cawston", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rodney Cawston

Chairman

Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation