



MESCALERO Apache TRIBE

P.O. Box 227
108 Central Avenue Mescalero, New Mexico 88340

Office: (575) 464-4494
Fax: (575) 464-9220

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MESCALERO CALLS FOR RESIGNATION OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF INDIAN AFFAIRS TARA SWEENEY

MESCALERO, NM. April 28, 2020. Yesterday, the Mescalero Apache Tribe joined tribes across the country in asking for the resignation of U.S. Department of Interior, Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Tara Sweeney ("Asst. Sec. Sweeney"). The Tribe's letter to President Trump stated that the Tribe had grave concerns about Asst. Sec. Sweeney's involvement with the \$8 billion stimulus fund set aside for tribal governments (the "stimulus fund") in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act which passed last month on March 27th. The Department of Treasury announced that the stimulus fund money would be allocated amongst tribes *and* Alaska Native Corporations (ANCs). Asst. Sec. Sweeney is a shareholder for Artic Slope Regional Corporation, an ANC, and reportedly advocated strongly for their inclusion in the allocation of stimulus fund money.

President Aguilar stated: "This money is supposed to help tribal governments respond to COVID-19. ANCs are for profit corporations – they do not provide direct governmental services and do not have the same authority or responsibility as tribal governments. Alaskan Native villages are tribal governments and are included already. There is no reason to include ANCs."

Several tribes, including three Alaskan Native Villages, filed suit to prevent the federal government from disbursing monies from the stimulus fund to ANCs. Late last night, the federal judge presiding over the lawsuit issued a partial victory to tribes – the federal government must hold the money it wants to pay to ANCs pending further proceedings. The rest of the stimulus fund money is to be disbursed to tribes in the coming days. Despite this partial victory, President Aguilar noted: "She will gain financially if her ANC receives this funding. This is a clear conflict of interest. The Tribe's request for Asst. Sec. Sweeney's resignation stands. Even if the judge sides with tribes in the end. Mescalero strongly supported Asst. Sec. Sweeney when she was nominated to her position; but this is plain wrong. She needs to resign."

Additionally, the Tribe learned from a whistleblower that the Department of Interior shared sensitive information with ANCs. Besides the resignation of Asst. Sec. Sweeney, the Tribe requested that the Inspectors General at both the Department of the Treasury and the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Office of Government Ethics review the matter.

###

Contact: Elaina Via
Mescalero Apache Tribe
(575) 464-4494