



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES
CHAIRMAN BRUCE WESTERMAN

To: House Committee on Natural Resources Republican Members
From: Indian and Insular Affairs Subcommittee staff, Ken Degenfelder
(Ken.Degenfelder@mail.house.gov), Jocelyn Broman
(Jocelyn.Broman@mail.house.gov), and Kirstin Liddell
(Kirstin.Liddell@mail.house.gov) x6-9725
Date: February 3, 2025
Subject: Legislative Hearing on 4 Bills

The Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs will hold a legislative hearing on four bills: H.R. 410 (Rep. Begich), “*Alaska Native Vietnam Era Veterans Land Allotment Extension Act of 2025*”; H.R. 412 (Rep. Bergman), To authorize the Bay Mills Indian Community of the State of Michigan to convey land and interests in land owned by the Tribe; H.R. 504 (Rep. Gimenez), “*Miccosukee Reserved Area Amendments Act*” ; and H.R. 741 (Rep. Stanton), “*Stronger Engagement for Indian Health Needs Act of 2025*” on **Wednesday, February 5, 2025, at 10:15 a.m. in 1324 Longworth House Office Building.**

Member offices are requested to notify Haig Kadian (Haig.Kadian@mail.house.gov) by 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, February 4, 2025, if their member intends to participate in the hearing.

I. KEY MESSAGES

- H.R. 410 would extend the Alaska Native Vietnam-era Veterans Land Allotment Program for an additional five years to allow more eligible Alaska Native veterans to select their allotments.
- H.R. 412 would authorize the right of the Bay Mills Indian Community to sell land the tribe owns outright without the need for specific federal approval.
- H.R. 504 would add the Osceola Camp tribal village to the Miccosukee Reserved Area and require the Secretary of the Interior to take appropriate actions to protect the structures within the Osceola Camp from flooding.
- H.R. 741 would elevate the Indian Health Service (IHS) Director position to Assistant Secretary for Indian Health within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), elevating the position from a Level V to a Level IV within the Executive Service Schedule.

II. WITNESSES

- **Mr. Nelson Angapak**, Alaska Federation of Natives, Anchorage, AK [H.R. 410]
- **Ms. Whitney Gravelle**, President, Bay Mills Indian Community, Brimley, MI [H.R. 412]
- **Mr. Talbert Cypress**, Chairman, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, Miami, FL [H.R. 504]
- **Mr. A.C. Locklear**, Interim CEO, National Indian Health Board, Washington, D.C. [*Minority Witness*]

III. BACKGROUND

[H.R. 410 \(Rep. Begich\), “Alaska Native Vietnam Era Veterans Land Allotment Extension Act of 2025”](#)

H.R. 410 would extend the Alaska Native Vietnam-era Veterans Land Allotment Program five years to end on December 29, 2030, rather than the current end date of December 29, 2025. This extension would enable the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to continue outreach to the estimated 150 Alaska Native Vietnam veterans that do not have addresses on file with BLM and who are eligible for up to 160 acres of federal land in Alaska. With President Trump’s 2021 rescission of several Alaska-specific Public Land Orders (PLOs), more federal land may be available to fulfill selected allotments by eligible Alaska Native veterans, necessitating more time to complete the program.¹

When Congress passed the General Allotment Act² in 1887, it was unclear if it applied to Alaska Natives. To clarify, Congress passed the Alaska Native Allotment Act (ANAA) in 1906, which allowed the Secretary of the Interior to allot up to 160-acres of non-mineral federal land in Alaska to any Alaska Native who was at least twenty-one years old.³ This allotted land was to remain with the allottee and their family in perpetuity.⁴

The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA)⁵ was enacted in 1971 to settle the aboriginal land claims of Alaska Natives, which had gone unresolved for more than 100 years since the U.S. purchased Alaska from the Russian Empire in 1867.⁶ At the time of ANCSA’s enactment, the Department of the Interior (DOI) held a backlog of at least 7,000 applications for allotments

¹ Public Land Order No. 7899; Partial Revocation of Public Land Orders No. 5169, 5170, 5171, 5173, 5179, 5180, 5184, 5186, 5187, 5188, 5353, Alaska. 86 FR 5236. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/01/19/2021-01111/public-land-order-no-7899-partial-revocation-of-public-land-orders-no-5169-5170-5171-5173-5179-5180>.

² 25 U.S.C. 331.

³ 34 Stat. 197 (Pub. Law 59-171). 1906. (repealed 1971).

<https://govtrackus.s3.amazonaws.com/legislink/pdf/stat/34/STATUTE-34-Pg197a.pdf>.

⁴ 1934 Stat. 197 (Pub. Law 59-171). 1906. <https://govtrackus.s3.amazonaws.com/legislink/pdf/stat/34/STATUTE-34-Pg197a.pdf>. In 1956, the Alaska Native Allotment Act was amended to require applicants to prove they had used and occupied the parcel for at least five years in order to qualify for an allotment, but also expanded the allotment eligibility to include national forest land as long as the applicant could prove the necessary occupancy and use. See Alaska Native Lands and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA): Overview and Selected Issues for Congress. Tana Fitzpatrick. December 2021. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46997>.

⁵ P.L. 92-203. 85 Stat. 688.

⁶ 15 Stat. 539.

under the ANAA.⁷ Because ANCSA repealed the ANAA, eligible Alaska Natives were encouraged to apply for an allotment of land before the ANAA was repealed.⁸ This push was overall successful, as 10,000 individuals applied for an allotment.⁹ However, many Alaska Natives serving overseas in the U.S. Armed Forces during the Vietnam War were unable to submit an application for an allotment or were unaware of the imminent repeal, which resulted in many Alaska Native veterans being unable to select an allotment.¹⁰

In 1998, Congress attempted to rectify this unintended consequence by passing legislation that included a provision in which Alaska Natives, or their heirs, who were eligible under ANAA and served during the Vietnam War (serving between January 1, 1969, and June 2, 1971), or were enlisted or drafted before December 17, 1971, to apply for an allotment of land.¹¹ The opportunities for allotted land came from vacant, unappropriated, and unreserved parcels.¹² These restrictions proved challenging to navigate, and out of the 3,000 eligible service members, only 500 applied.¹³ Noting the need to address the lack of success following the 1998 legislation, Congress amended the law in 2000 and again in 2004.¹⁴ Despite these changes, approximately 2,800 eligible Alaska Natives had yet to receive their allotment.¹⁵

In the 116th Congress, Congress passed the *John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation Management, and Recreation Act*, which included a provision establishing the Alaska Native Vietnam-era Veterans Land Allotment Program.¹⁶ The provision authorized eligible Alaska Native Vietnam veterans, or their heirs, to select an allotment of up to 160 acres from certain federal land. To be eligible, the applicant (or their heir) must show proof of service between August 5, 1964, and December 31, 1971, and have not previously received an allotment. This provision authorized an application period of five years beginning after final regulations were issued, which currently is from December 28, 2020, to December 29, 2025.¹⁷

In January 2021, under President Trump, then-Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt signed the revocation of 11 Public Land Orders (PLOs) initially put in place in 1972 and 1973 for the

⁷ Alaska Native Lands and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA): Overview and Selected Issues for Congress. Tana Fitzpatrick. December 2021. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46997>.

⁸ 43 U.S. Code § 1617 and S. Rept. 115-451. Alaska Native Vietnam Era Veterans Land Allotment Act.

⁹ S. Rept. 115-451. Alaska Native Vietnam Era Veterans Land Allotment Act.

<https://www.congress.gov/congressional-report/115th-congress/senate-report/451/1>.

¹⁰ Alaska Native Lands and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA): Overview and Selected Issues for Congress. Tana Fitzpatrick. December 2021. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46997>; and S. Rept. 115-451. Alaska Native Vietnam Era Veterans Land Allotment Act. <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-report/115th-congress/senate-report/451/1>

¹¹ 1998 Act, Sec. 432 of Public Law 105-276.

¹² Id.

¹³ Sullivan, Murkowski Renew Effort to Deliver Alaska Native Vietnam-Era Veterans Their Rightful Land Allotments. Feb. 13, 2024. <https://www.murkowski.senate.gov/press/release/sullivan-murkowski-renew-effort-to-deliver-alaska-native-vietnam-era-veterans-their-rightful-land-allotments>.

¹⁴ S. Rept. 115-451. Alaska Native Vietnam Era Veterans Land Allotment Act. p. 4-5

<https://www.congress.gov/congressional-report/115th-congress/senate-report/451/1>.

¹⁵ Id.

¹⁶ P.L. 116-9, Sec. 1119 (43 U.S. Code § 1629g-1).

¹⁷ Murray, Mariel. *Alaska Native Lands and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA): Overview and Selected Issues for Congress*. CRS. December 2021. <https://www.crs.gov/Reports/R46997?source=search#fn130>.

benefit of Alaska Native Corporations under ANCSA.¹⁸ Then-Secretary Bernhardt’s action opened up 28 million acres of BLM land which could be used for allotment purposes.¹⁹ However, in February 2021, the Biden Administration postponed the revocation, prompting a battle that waged throughout the Biden Administration’s term.²⁰

In February 2024, Sens. Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan accused then-Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland of slow-walking the allotment program by ordering further environmental impact statements.²¹ The senators also highlighted that over the three years the program had been up and running, only 18 of the more than 2,000 eligible Alaska Native veterans had received their allotments.²² On February 26, 2024, the BLM website for the Alaska Native Vietnam-era Veterans Land Allotment Program showed that only 15 applications had been certificated or completed during the three years the program operated.²³ BLM data through January 24, 2025, indicated that 41 applications have been certificated, with 378 applications in process. It was also noted that the BLM still needs addresses for 150 eligible veterans.²⁴ Considering how slow the process has been for BLM to review and certify applications, it is unlikely that all eligible Alaska Native Vietnam veterans would receive their promised allotments without extending the program.

On January 20, 2025, President Trump issued an Executive Order (EO) titled *Unleashing Alaska’s Extraordinary Resource Potential* in which Public Land Order No. 7899, 7900, 7901, 7902, and 7903 were reinstated as originally issued on January 11, 2021.²⁵ This EO also required the Department of the Interior to review all PLOs to ensure that Interior’s actions are consistent with several Alaska related statutes, including the Alaska Native Vietnam-era Veterans Land Allotment Program.²⁶

H.R. 410 would extend the Alaska Native Vietnam-era Veterans Land Allotment Program for five more years beyond its current expiration of December 29, 2025.

¹⁸ Public Land Order No. 7899; Partial Revocation of Public Land Orders No. 5169, 5170, 5171, 5173, 5179, 5180, 5184, 5186, 5187, 5188, 5353, Alaska. 86 FR 5236. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/01/19/2021-01111/public-land-order-no-7899-partial-revocation-of-public-land-orders-no-5169-5170-5171-5173-5179-5180>.

¹⁹ Sens. Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan, Press Release, “Access Denied: BLM To Revoke 2021 Public Land Orders, Keep Alaska Lands in Highly Restricted Status.” July 2024. <https://www.murkowski.senate.gov/press/release/access-denied-blm-to-revoke-2021-public-land-orders-keep-alaska-lands-in-highly-restricted-status>.

²⁰ Id.

²¹ Sens. Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan, Press Release, “Sullivan, Murkowski Renew Effort to Deliver Alaska Native Vietnam-Era Veterans Their Rightful Land Allotments.” Feb. 13, 2024. <https://www.murkowski.senate.gov/press/release/sullivan-murkowski-renew-effort-to-deliver-alaska-native-vietnam-era-veterans-their-rightful-land-allotments>.

²² Id.

²³ BLM, “Alaska Native Vietnam-era Veterans Land Allotment Program” Feb. 26, 2024, archived at Wayback Machine, <https://web.archive.org/web/20240226002134/https://www.blm.gov/programs/lands-and-realty/regional-information/alaska/land-transfer/ak-native-allotment-act/alaska-native-vietnam-veterans-land-allotment>.

²⁴ BLM, “Alaska Native Vietnam-era Veterans Land Allotment Program” Jan. 27, 2025. <https://www.blm.gov/programs/lands-and-realty/regional-information/alaska/land-transfer/ak-native-allotment-act/alaska-native-vietnam-veterans-land-allotment>

²⁵ *Unleashing Alaska’s Extraordinary Resource Potential*. Executive Order. January 20, 2025. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/unleashing-alaskas-extraordinary-resource-potential/>.

²⁶ Id.

H.R. 412 (Rep. Bergman), To authorize the Bay Mills Indian Community of the State of Michigan to convey land and interests in land owned by the Tribe

H.R. 412 would ensure the Bay Mills Indian Community could sell, transfer, lease, encumber, or otherwise convey land the tribe owns outright without seeking federal approval. The bill would not affect any land held in trust for the Bay Mills Indian Community.

The Bay Mills Indian Community of the State of Michigan (Bay Mills) is part of the Chippewa, or Ojibwe, population.²⁷ The tribe's land base is divided into two areas: one near Brimley, Michigan, and the other on Sugar Island in the St. Mary's River.²⁸ The Bay Mills population is approximately 2,200 tribal citizens.²⁹ The tribe adopted a constitution under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, and has been recognized by the federal government since 1936.³⁰ In 1977, Bay Mills adopted a community comprehensive plan that the tribe credits with increasing their trust land base, creating over 600 jobs, and reducing unemployment by 50 percent in their community.³¹ Reducing bureaucratic and unnecessary barriers to further economic development will continue to benefit the tribe and its future vision.

The Non-Intercourse Act of 1834 prohibited land transactions with Indians unless authorized by Congress.³² The Act was intended to protect Indian tribes by preventing the loss of their lands except by treaty by preventing the transfer, sale, lease, or other conveyance of land owned by an Indian tribe to third parties without federal approval. Over the centuries, several Acts of Congress providing for the acquisition, conveyance, and leasing of land in trust for Indians have superseded the Non-Intercourse Act even though the Act itself has never been repealed.

In recent years, the Non-Intercourse Act has generally not interfered with the ability of a tribe to buy, sell, or lease land that it owns in fee simple, meaning that land owned outright by the tribe and is subject to taxation and should be freely alienable. However, the extent to which the Non-Intercourse Act should be applied to Indian lands has generated a great deal of litigation throughout history and has resulted in several court decisions. Although the purpose of the Non-Intercourse Act is viewed by some as antiquated and outdated, the U.S. Supreme Court in 2005 said it "remain[s] substantially in force today...[and] bars sales of tribal land without the acquiescence of the Federal Government."³³ Tribes throughout the country have faced interference with economic development when title insurance companies have interpreted the Non-Intercourse Act to apply to fee simple real estate owned by tribes, thus refusing to provide title insurance.³⁴ Similar bills to H.R. 412 were enacted, allowing tribes in Florida, Minnesota,

²⁷ "Bay Mills," Tiller's Guide to Indian Country, Veronica E. Velarde Tiller (2015).

²⁸ Id.

²⁹ Bay Mills Tribal Enrollment Department. <https://www.baymills.org/enrollment>.

³⁰ "Bay Mills," Tiller's Guide to Indian Country, Veronica E. Velarde Tiller (2015).

³¹ Bay Mills Indian Community, "Community Engagement Plan 2022 Comprehensive Plan" p. 3 https://www.baymills.org/files/ugd/869f65_8d1060f99c354090b7791423c85eba12.pdf.

³² 25 U.S.C. §177. Congress passed several statutes in 1790, 1793, 1796, 1799, 1802, and 1834 that collectively are the Nonintercourse Act.

³³ City of Sherill v. Oneida Indian Nation of New York, 544 U.S. 197, 204 (2005).

³⁴ Testimony of Chris Osceola of Seminole Tribe of Florida before the House Committee on Natural Resources. September 2020. <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/II/II24/20200924/111048/HHRG-116-II24-Wstate-OsceolaC-20200924.pdf>.

Oklahoma, and Oregon to lease or transfer fee land the tribe owned.³⁵ Additionally, Congress enacted similar language for two other Michigan Tribes in the early 2000s.³⁶

H.R. 412 would authorize the Bay Mills Indian Community to sell land that the tribe owns outright in fee simple without the need for federal approval.

H.R. 504 (Rep. Gimenez), “Miccosukee Reserved Area Amendments Act”

H.R. 504 would amend the Miccosukee Reserved Area Act to include the Osceola Camp tribal village as part of the Miccosukee Reserved Area and would direct the Secretary of the Interior to consult with the tribe and then take appropriate actions to protect the structures within the village from flooding.

The Miccosukee Tribe is currently located in the Greater Everglades in South Florida. The oral history of the Miccosukee Tribe claims originality in the northern part of Florida,³⁷ and that the tribe’s ancestors used land stretching from the Appalachians to the Florida Keys.³⁸ After the Indian Removal Act of 1830 was implemented, many Miccosukee and other Indian peoples hid in the Everglades and subsequently fought in the second and third Seminole Wars.³⁹ The tribe eventually settled and lived in what became Everglades National Park, but were moved further north when the park was officially created. Following the tribe’s federal recognition in 1962, the villages the tribe occupied in the northernmost area within the park along the Tamiami Trail were managed as a Special Use Permit from 1964 until 1998.⁴⁰ However, as the tribe grew the need for more land was apparent.⁴¹

Congress passed the Miccosukee Reserved Area Act (MRAA) in 1998, replacing the special use permit with a permanent framework for the tribe’s occupancy in the Everglades. The MRAA authorized the tribe’s use of the area, declaring it the Miccosukee Reserve Area (MRA) and noting it as “Indian Country.”⁴² The MRAA maintained that the Federal Government had the right to engage in restoration and protection activities in the area and that any costs associated with those activities fell to the federal government.⁴³

The MRAA did not include the area known as the Osceola Camp, a residential tribal village within the Everglades National Park. The village has a residential community and associated infrastructure, including wastewater treatment and water supply systems. Chairman Cypress identified the Osceola Camp as “one of the only remaining Tribal tree islands inhabited by a

³⁵ See, Pub. L. 117-65; Pub. L. 115-179; Pub. L. 114-127; and Pub. L. 106-127.

³⁶ See, Pub. L. 110-76; and Pub. L. 110-453.

³⁷ “Miccosukee,” Tiller’s Guide to Indian Country, Veronica E. Velarde Tiller (2015).

³⁸ Miccosukee Casino & Resort, “History of the Miccosukee Tribe,” <https://miccosukee.com/miccosukee-tribe-history/>.

³⁹ “Miccosukee,” Tiller’s Guide to Indian Country, Veronica E. Velarde Tiller (2015).

⁴⁰ Testimony of Talbert H. Cypress, Chairman of the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, July 10, 2024. <https://www.indian.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/07-10-2024-Cypress-Testimony.pdf>.

⁴¹ H. Rept. 105-708, <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-report/105th-congress/house-report/708/1>.

⁴² S. Rept. 118-245, <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-report/118th-congress/senate-report/245/1>.

⁴³ Id.

substantial residential community.”⁴⁴ Tree islands, formed by sediment caught in roots, within the Everglades provided sanctuary to the Miccosukee and Seminole ancestors during and after the Seminole Wars.⁴⁵ The Osceola Camp is currently subject to a special use permit renewal by the National Park.⁴⁶

The National Park Service is already working with the Miccosukee Tribe to protect the Osceola Camp from flooding caused by the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan and the Central Everglades Planning Project.⁴⁷ By incorporating the Osceola Camp into the Miccosukee Reserved Area, the tribe will have authority over the village area and will work with the Department of the Interior to elevate the area to prevent flooding, preserve village infrastructure, and ensure continued residency by tribal members.⁴⁸

H.R. 504 would amend the Miccosukee Reserved Area Act to include the Osceola Camp as part of the Miccosukee Reserved Area. The bill also would direct the Secretary of the Interior to consult with the tribe and then take appropriate actions to protect the structures within the area from flooding.

H.R. 741, (Rep. Stanton), “Stronger Engagement for Indian Health Needs Act of 2025”

H.R. 741 would elevate the Director of the IHS to the level of Assistant Secretary within the HHS. This elevates that position from Level V to Level IV on the Executive Schedule and would increase both the visibility and the base rate of pay for the position.

The role of the Federal Government in providing health services to American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) is based in the U.S. Constitution’s Indian Commerce Clause.⁴⁹ The Snyder Act of 1921 provided the legislative authority for this trust responsibility to the Bureau of Indian Affairs.⁵⁰ Under the Transfer Act of 1954, the healthcare responsibilities toward AI/ANs was moved to the Department of Health Education and Welfare (which eventually became HHS).⁵¹ The IHS was officially established in 1955.⁵² The modern statutory basis for the federal provision of healthcare to AI/ANs is the Indian Healthcare Improvement Act (IHICIA) which was

⁴⁴ Testimony of Talbert H. Cypress, Chairman of the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, July 10, 2024. <https://www.indian.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/07-10-2024-Cypress-Testimony.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Jennifer Reed, “Stepping into a Hidden World in the Everglades,” New York Times. Oct. 29, 2024. <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/29/travel/everglades-miccosukee-reservation.html>.

⁴⁶ Testimony of Talbert H. Cypress, Chairman of the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, July 10, 2024. <https://www.indian.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/07-10-2024-Cypress-Testimony.pdf>.

⁴⁷ National Park Service, “Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida Osceola Camp Cure Plan Environmental Assessment,” Oct. 2023, available at: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?documentID=132461>; and S. Rept. 118-245, <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-report/118th-congress/senate-report/245/1>.

⁴⁸ *Congressman Carlos Gimenez Introduces Bill to Incorporate Osceola Camp into the MRA*. Congressman Carlos Gimenez. <https://gimenez.house.gov/2025/1/congressman-carlos-gimenez-introduces-bill-to-incorporate-osceola-camp-into-the-mra>.

⁴⁹ U.S. Const. Art. I, Sec. 8, Clause 3.

⁵⁰ 25 U.S.C. 13.

⁵¹ P.L. 83-568, act of August 5, 1954, 68 Stat. 674, as amended; 42 U.S.C. §2001 et seq.

⁵² Indian Health Service. Gold Book. Part One.

https://www.ihs.gov/sites/newsroom/themes/responsive2017/display_objects/documents/GOLD_BOOK_part1.pdf.

first passed in 1976⁵³ and was permanently reauthorized by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act in 2010.⁵⁴

Currently, the Director of the IHS serves under the Secretary of HHS upon being appointed by the President and confirmed by the U.S. Senate.⁵⁵ H.R. 741 would change the IHS Director position to Assistant Secretary for Indian Health within the HHS. This elevation would place the Assistant Secretary for Indian Health on par with that of the Assistant Secretary for Health in HHS's organization.⁵⁶ The new position of "Assistant Secretary for Indian Health" would also be paid at a Level IV rate, an increase of \$12,100 per year over Level V based on the January 2025 Rates of Basic Pay for the Executive Schedule.⁵⁷ H.R. 741 would also allow the creation of an additional Deputy Assistant Secretary, at the discretion of the HHS Secretary.

Advocates of this change believe that elevating the IHS Director to an Assistant Secretary level would amplify conversations surrounding health in Indian country and bring greater attention to the issues of addressing the healthcare needs for AI/ANs.⁵⁸ However, the bill does not prescribe how healthcare challenges in Indian country would be addressed, aside from the formal elevation of the IHS Director position.

IHS remains on the Government Accountability Office's High-Risk List, which includes federal programs most vulnerable to waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement or that need transformative change. For nearly a decade, the HHS Office of Inspector General and others have indicated that inadequate oversight of healthcare continues to hinder IHS's ability to provide an adequate quality of care despite continued increases in the agency's budget.

IHS has continued to work towards improvement. In 2023 and 2024, IHS finalized agency work plans to address agency-wide priorities of patient safety, human capital, operational capacity, financial capacity, compliance and regulatory improvement, and strategic planning.⁵⁹ The Director's Year 2 Accomplishments Report, released in October 2024, highlighted several improvements at the agency, including that a new data collection and monitoring system has allowed IHS to monitor the flow of Purchased/Referred Care funds across the agency, and that IHS has partnered with tribes across the country to plan and construct new health care facilities.⁶⁰ While some improvements have been made at IHS, the agency still has much more to

⁵³ 25 U.S.C. 1611 et seq.

⁵⁴ Indian Health Care Improvement Act. Indian Health Service. <https://www.ihs.gov/IHCIA/>.

⁵⁵ 25 U.S.C. 1661(a).

⁵⁶ 25 U.S.C. 1661(a). and HHS Organizational Chart. <https://www.hhs.gov/about/agencies/orgchart/index.html>.

⁵⁷ Office of Personnel Management, "Salary Table No. 2025-EX" <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/salary-tables/pdf/2025/EX.pdf>.

⁵⁸ National Council of Urban Indian Health. NCUIH-Endorsed Bipartisan Bill to Elevate Native Health Care Within the Federal Government Re-introduced by Representative Stanton and Representative Joyce. April 2023. <https://ncuih.org/2023/04/10/ncuih-endorsed-bipartisan-bill-to-elevate-native-health-care-within-the-federal-government-re-introduced-by-representative-stanton-and-representative-joyce/>.

⁵⁹ "IHS 2023 Agency Work Plan," *Indian Health Service*, <https://www.ihs.gov/quality/work-plan-summary/> and "IHS 2024 Work Plan Summary," *Indian health Service*, <https://www.ihs.gov/quality/ihs-2024-work-plan-summary/>.

⁶⁰ Indian Health Service, "Director's Year 2 Accomplishments Report—2024" Oct. 2024. p. 5, 6-7, 9. https://www.ihs.gov/sites/newsroom/themes/responsive2017/display_objects/documents/2024_Letters/Enclosure_D_TLL_DUIOLL_100424.pdf.

accomplish to fully execute its mission to “raise the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of AI/ANs to the highest level.”⁶¹

IV. MAJOR PROVISIONS & SECTION-BY-SECTION

H.R. 410 (Rep. Begich), “Alaska Native Vietnam Era Veterans Land Allotment Extension Act of 2025”

Section 2. *Extension of the Alaska Native Vietnam Era Veterans Land Allotment Program.* This section would extend the time program an additional five years.

H.R. 412 (Rep. Bergman), To authorize the Bay Mills Indian Community of the State of Michigan to convey land and interests in land owned by the Tribe

Section 1. *Land and Interests of the Bay Mills Indian Community of Michigan.* This section would allow the Bay Mills Indian Community of Michigan to transfer, lease and otherwise convey fee land without the need for federal approval.

H.R. 504 (Rep. Gimenez), “Miccosukee Reserved Area Amendments Act”

Section 2. *Miccosukee Reserved Area Addition.* This section adds the area known as the Osceola Camp to the Miccosukee Reserved Area.

Section 3. *Protection of the Osceola Camp from Flooding.* This section authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to consult and work with the Miccosukee Tribe to protect the Osceola Camp tribal village from flooding.

H.R. 741, (Rep. Stanton), “Stronger Engagement for Indian Health Needs Act of 2025”

Section 2. *Assistant Secretary for Indian Health.* This section elevates the position of Director of IHS to the level of Assistant Secretary for Indian Health and elevates the basic rate of pay to Level IV of the Executive Service. Additionally, a Deputy Assistant Secretary may be appointed with the approval of the HHS Secretary.

V. CBO COST ESTIMATE

H.R. 410 (Rep. Begich), “Alaska Native Vietnam Era Veterans Land Allotment Extension Act of 2025”

Unknown.

H.R. 412 (Rep. Bergman), “To authorize the Bay Mills Indian Community of the State of Michigan to convey land and interests in land owned by the Tribe”

Unknown.

⁶¹ Indian Health Service, “About IHS,” <https://www.ihs.gov/aboutihs/>.

H.R. 504 (Rep. Gimenez), “Miccosukee Reserved Area Amendments Act”

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimated that a substantially similar bill from the 118th Congress (S. 2783) would have no effect on direct spending or revenues.⁶²

H.R. 741, (Rep. Stanton), “Stronger Engagement for Indian Health Needs Act of 2025”

Unknown.

VI. ADMINISTRATION POSITION

Unknown.

VII. EFFECT ON CURRENT LAW (RAMSEYER)

H.R. 410 (Rep. Begich), “Alaska Native Vietnam Era Veterans Land Allotment Extension Act of 2025”

H.R. 504 (Rep. Gimenez), “Miccosukee Reserved Area Amendments Act”

H.R. 741, (Rep. Stanton), “Stronger Engagement for Indian Health Needs Act of 2025”

⁶² Congressional Budget Office. S. 2783, Miccosukee Reserved Area Amendments Act. <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/60996>.