COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

MARK BEGICH
ALASKA

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON OCEANS, ATMOSPHERE, FISHERIES AND COAST GUARD
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

March 8, 2013

Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
Senate Appropriations Committee
SD-131
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
Senate Appropriations Committee
SD-131
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Reed and Ranking Member Murkowski:

I write to express my support for passage of an appropriation bill for the agencies within the jurisdiction of the Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2013 after the current continuing resolution expires on March 27, 2013. As you know, because continuing resolutions are temporary measures carrying over previous year funding without new start, transfer and reprogramming authority, they create significant uncertainty and disruption in federal agencies' ability to execute taxpayer dollars in the best interest of the nation.

Additionally, uncertainty associated with temporary continuing resolutions prevents strategic, long-term planning and budgeting. Passing annual appropriations bills are necessary to ensure Congress exercises its Constitutional responsibilities to appropriately allocate taxpayer funds and provide federal agencies with the ability to create smart, effective budgets extending into future fiscal years.

As you work on providing funding for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2013 for programs in your subcommittee jurisdiction, I respectfully request support for the programs listed below. The funding requested for the national programs is to be spent at the agencies' discretion within the existing budget line and is not intended for any specific business, state, community or other entity.

1. **Title:** Staffing Package Fulfillment for Existing Healthcare Facilities
Program Description: Section 818(e) of P.L. 94-437 authorizes the Indian Health Service (IHS) to make arrangements with an Indian tribe to establish a joint venture project for the acquisition, including construction, of a health care facility. The Indian tribe will expend tribal funds, private sector funds, or other available non-IHS resources, including loan guarantees, for the acquisition, including construction, of a tribally owned health care facility. In exchange, for a minimum of 20 years, the IHS is to lease the

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health care facility and the land incidental thereto under a no-cost lease, and agree to provide the equipment, supplies, and staffing for the operation and maintenance of such a health facility.
Fiscal Year 2013 President's Budget Request: $0
Additional Amount Requested: +$31 million (Tanana Chief's Conference: $8 million, Southcentral Foundation: $13 million and Norton Sound Health Corporation: $10 million).
Rationale: IHS entered in to Joint Venture Projects which allowed the aforementioned tribal health consortia to build much needed facilities in their respective regions. IHS and Congress have the responsibility to provide funding for staff and operational costs for these facilities, as was committed.
Recipient: Department of Health and Human Services, Indian Health Service

2. **Title:** Contract Support Costs
Program Description: The Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 (Public Law 93-638) authorizes Tribes to enter into contracts to manage federal programs previously administered by the Departments of Health and Human Services and Interior. Under these contracts tribes operate hospitals and clinics and administer public safety and public assistance programs that would otherwise be carried out by the federal government. Public Law 93-638 requires tribes be paid in full for the contract support costs they incur.
Fiscal Year 2013 President's Budget Request: $476.5 million
Additional Amount Requested: +$112 million
Rationale: Indian Health Service providers recently reported an anticipated contracts support shortfall for Fiscal Year 2013 of $100+ million. Since 2005 a series of Supreme Court cases have reaffirmed the federal government's responsibility to pay Contract Support Costs to tribes in full. Additional funding will address the projected shortfall so the Federal government can meet its contracting obligations. H.R. 6091, the House of Representatives appropriations bill for the Departments of Interior, Health and Related Agencies recommended $70 million above the President's Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2013.
Recipient: Department of Health and Human Services, Indian Health Services

3. **Title:** Alaska Conveyance and Lands Program
Program Description: Congress acknowledged the lack of progress in transferring federal lands to the State of Alaska (1995) and Alaska Native Corporations (1971) in the *Alaska Land Conveyance Act of 2004.* The Act set timelines to spend the decades of delay. Only half of the roughly 150 million acres owed to the State and Native corporations has been conveyed and patented.
Fiscal Year 2013 President's Budget Request: $16.741 million
Additional Amount Requested: +$17 million

Rationale: The Fiscal Year 2013 President's Budget Request reduced funding for the Alaska conveyance program by $12.4 million. There's an estimated $300 million backlog in work to complete the conveyance of lands owed to Native corporations and the State of Alaska. Restoring funding to appropriate levels sustains progress toward the program goal.
Recipient: Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management

Thank your consideration of this request. Please do not hesitate to contact my staff member, Lindsay Kavanaugh, at (202) 224-3004 should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Mark Begich
United States Senator