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For Immediate Release

Federal Government Shutdown Negatively Impacts Indian Country **Highlighting the Need for a Fundamental Change in Indian Country Appropriations**

(Nashville, TN)— Last December (2018), the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights released *Broken Promises: Continuing Federal Funding Shortfall for Native Americans*. This report was a highly anticipated follow up report to the previously released *A Quiet Crisis: Federal Funding and Unmet Needs in Indian Country* (2003).

Unfortunately, despite the 15 years that have transpired between the release of reports, the 2018 report states “...the efforts undertaken by the federal government in the past 15 years have resulted in only minor improvements, at best, for the Native population as a whole. And, in some respects, the U.S. Government has backslid in its treatment of Native Americans, and there is more that must be done compared to when the Commission issued *A Quiet Crisis*.”

While the updated findings of the report come as no surprise to Indian Country, they once again highlight a fundamental moral, ethical, and legal failure of the United States to fulfill its trust and treaty obligations. As reflected in the report, **“The United States expects all nations to live up to their treaty obligations; it should live up to its own.”**

To exacerbate the finding of this report, the federal government is on the verge of experiencing its longest shutdown in U.S. history. While there are many headlines about the real life impacts of the shutdown, the negative impacts on Tribal Nations and their respective citizenry have been neglected. Because of the uniqueness and complexity of our government-to-government diplomatic relationship with the United States, the impact is particularly odious and shameful.

Tribal Nations ceded millions of acres of land and natural resources to the United States, often involuntarily. As part of this exchange, promises were made that exist in perpetuity. The promises were to ensure for our overall health, well-being, and prosperity. Unfortunately, despite these ceded lands and resources-- the very foundation of America’s strength and wealth-- the United States continues to fall woefully short of its obligations.

As stated by USET SPF President Kirk Francis, **“This shutdown must end now as political gamesmanship has real life negative consequences to Native and non-Natives alike. Furthermore, the time has arrived for the United States to prioritize its commitments to Indian Country by taking the necessary steps to fully fund its obligations to Indian Country and to make all Indian Country funding non-discretionary by moving it to the mandatory/**

entitlement side of the federal budget as an advance appropriation across the board. Only then can the United States truly state that it is honoring its promises and fulfilling its obligations. ”

We now find ourselves caught up in a political fight that fails to properly account for, honor, and respect this country’s first moral and ethical obligation. Our absence once again highlights the unfortunate truth that we are too often invisible and therefore do not receive the appropriate attention and consideration that we rightfully deserve. Fortunately, we are our own best advocates and Indian Country possesses tremendous strength. All of Indian Country must stand up during moments like these and express its voice to move us collectively forward to a more just reality.

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United South and Eastern Tribes (USET)

Established in 1969, the United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc. (USET) is a non-profit, inter-Tribal organization representing twenty-seven (27) federally recognized Tribal Nations, from Maine to Florida to Texas. USET is dedicated to enhancing the development of Tribal Nations, and improving the capabilities of Tribal governments, improving the quality of life for Indian people through a variety of technical and supportive programmatic services.

USET Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF)

Established in 2014, the USET Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF) is a non-profit, inter-Tribal organization representing twenty-seven (27) federally recognized Tribal Nations, from Maine to Florida to Texas. USET SPF is dedicated to promoting, protecting, and advancing the inherent sovereign rights and authorities of Tribal Nations and in assisting its membership in dealing effectively with public policy issues.

Because there is Strength in Unity