

## November 19: USET SPF Alert: Support Bill to Extend Deadline for Use of Coronavirus Relief Fund Payments

Dear USET SPF Membership,

On November 17, 2020, a bill was introduced that would grant Tribal Nations, states, and local governments an extension to expend payments received from the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF). [S. 4898](#) [linked] was introduced by Senators Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Margaret Hassan (D-NH) and proposes an extension through September 2021 for those that have received CRF payments. If enacted, this bill would provide CRF recipients a 9-month extension from the current deadline of December 30, 2020.

This extension is vital due to the delayed issuance of CRF payments to Tribal Nations following passage of the CARES Act in March 2020. The CRF was established to provide relief to all units of government across the United States, including Tribal governments, as they responded to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, despite the statutory deadline of April 27th for disbursement of CRF funding, the delivery of these resources to Tribal Nations was delayed until May (60% of total funding) and June (40% of funding). This meant that while the CARES Act provided for CRF funding for expenses incurred during the period between March 1, 2020 and December 30, 2020, Tribal Nations had significantly less time to plan and budget for the expenditure of these resources in compliance with the law. In addition, due to centuries of federal neglect and underfunding, many Tribal Nations operate with inadequate governmental infrastructure—including staffing infrastructure. Combined with the reduced capacity as a result of the COVID-19 emergency, this lack of infrastructure hinders our ability to swiftly obligate and spend down these resources.

It has also become clear that all units of government, including Tribal Nations, will be forced to contend with the impacts of COVID-19 long after the end of calendar year 2020. Tribal Nations must have the opportunity to utilize CRF funds using a timeline that accounts for the circumstances we face—not under a deadline that reflects the unrealistic hope that COVID-19 would be eradicated by year's end. With this in mind, USET SPF has consistently [advocated](#) [letter to Congress linked] for an extension in the statutory deadline.

USET SPF is encouraging its membership to reach out to your Representative(s) and Senators, as well as those with which you have relationships, to urge that they cosponsor, support passage of [S. 4898](#) [linked], and to support passage of a similar version in the House of Representatives. To find your Representative(s) and Senators and their office contact information, please visit the House's "[Find Your Representative](#)" page [linked] and the "[Senators of the 116th Congress](#)" contact page [linked].

Additionally, the Native American Finance Officers Association (NAFOA) has developed a [sample template letter](#) [linked] for use in Tribal Nation outreach efforts to Congressional delegations.

Thank You,  
Brian Howard

Brian Howard ~ *Citizen of the Gila River Indian Community*  
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