



AMERICAN INDIAN SCIENCE  
AND ENGINEERING SOCIETY



NICWA  
National Indian Child Welfare Association  
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National Indian  
Education Association



NATIVE FORWARD  
SCHOLARS FUND

October 15, 2025

The Honorable Russell Vought  
Director  
Office of Management and Budget  
725 17th Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20503

The Honorable Linda McMahon  
Secretary of Education  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

*Delivered Electronically*

## **RE: Reductions in Force for Trust and Treaty Obligations to Indian Education**

Dear Director Vought and Secretary McMahon,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and the schools, educators, students, and Tribal Nations we represent, we write to express our grave concern regarding Reductions in Force (RIFs) at the Department of Education (ED). RIFs within ED will directly impact Tribal funding and programs, directly violating the Treaty and trust obligations to Tribal Nations. It is imperative that these RIFs be rescinded immediately.

To permanently lay off personnel necessary to carry out these obligations undermines the very framework through which the federal government fulfills its fiduciary responsibilities. We understand that as the shutdown continues, the belt on remaining funding will continue to tighten. Accordingly, Indian Country is not opposed to balancing the budget and reducing federal waste. However, these sacred obligations to Native education, prepaid with our lands and resources, should not be used as leverage in negotiations by either party. We, too, urge Congress to reopen the government as quickly as possible, but as Tribal Nations, we refuse to be used as instruments in any type of partisan politics.

Beginning Friday, October 10, 2025, the staff at the Office of Indian Education (OIE), staff at the Impact Aid office, and the administrators for Alaska Native Education and Native Hawaiian Education have received termination notices. These actions constitute a direct abrogation of the United States' trust and treaty obligations to Tribal Nations. While certain accounts may be discretionary, these obligations are not. They are solemn commitments rooted in treaties, statutes, and centuries of federal precedent. The United States' duty to provide for the education, health, and welfare of Native peoples was undertaken in exchange for vast Tribal lands and resources and remains a continuing legal and moral obligation of the federal government.

Therefore, the RIF notices to Tribal program employees must be rescinded immediately. Indian Country cannot wait for the government to reopen; we do not know how much longer this

shutdown will last. The security of Tribal programs being forward funded or receiving advance appropriations is undermined without the employees who continue to disburse funds and provide technical assistance upon the passage of funding agreements. We urge OMB to direct the Department of Education to immediately suspend and rescind all RIF actions impacting Tribal serving programs.

Respectfully,

American Indian Science and Engineering Society  
Arizona Indian Education Association  
Great Plains Tribal Chairman's Association  
National Congress of American Indians  
National Indian Child Welfare Association  
National Indian Education Association  
National Indian Head Start Directors Association  
National Indian Impacted Schools Association  
National Johnson O'Malley Association  
Native Forward  
Navajo Nation  
Oklahoma Council on Indian Education  
United South and Eastern Tribes

CC:

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chairman  
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Chairwoman  
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Tim Walberg  
Chairman  
House Education and Workforce Committee

The Honorable Bobby Scott  
Ranking Member  
House Education and Workforce Committee

The Honorable Kevin Kiley  
Chairman  
House Subcommittee on Early Childhood,  
Elementary and Secondary Education

The Honorable Suzanne Bonamici  
Ranking Member  
House Subcommittee on Early Childhood,  
Elementary and Secondary Education

The Honorable Bill Cassidy  
Chairman  
Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions  
Committee

The Honorable Bernie Sanders  
Ranking Member  
Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions  
Committee

The Honorable Tommy Tuberville  
Chairman  
Senate Subcommittee on Education and the  
American Family

The Honorable Lisa Blunt Rochester  
Ranking Member  
Senate Subcommittee on Education and the  
American Family