

March 7: USET SPF Alert: House and Senate Opioid Dear Colleagues--Short Deadlines

Dear USET SPF Board of Directors and DC Tribal Reps,

Please see below and [attached](#) for two "[Dear Colleague](#)" [definition linked] sign-on letters encouraging appropriators to ensure that any additional funding appropriated to combat the opioid crisis include targeted and direct funding for Tribal Nations. As you are well aware, the opioid crisis has significantly impacted USET SPF Tribal Nations, as our Tribal communities continue to experience the deleterious effects of opioid abuse and trafficking. It is critical that Tribal governments have access to all the resources necessary to address this crisis. However, Tribal Nations do not currently have direct access to a majority of funding available. **USET SPF encourages member Tribal Nations to ask that their Representative(s) and Senators sign on to the letter in their respective chamber to show broad Congressional support for these vital Tribal resources.**

Senate letter [[attached](#)]

Lead Senator: Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND)
Office Contact: Libby Marking
Deadline: TODAY, 10:30 am ET

House letter [below]

Lead Rep.: Martha McSally (R-AZ)
Office Contact: Bryan McVae
Deadline: TOMORROW, 3/8, noon ET

Again, please note that these letters are for sign-on by Senators and Representatives, respectively. As always, I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you,

Liz Malerba ~ *Citizen of the Mohegan Tribe*
Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs

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The letter below to Appropriators requests that they remember to target additional funds to address the opioid crisis to states with the highest overdose and mortality rates, and to minority populations such as Native Americans who have much higher than average overdose rates.

The 21st Century Cures Act provided \$1 billion to address the opioid crisis, and while this was a good start, it was too little, and the formula used did not include per-capita overdose rates. This left many small and medium sized states, especially those with higher than average per-capita overdose rates with much less funding than expected. Additionally, the Native American tribes—who have had a 500% increase in overdose deaths—have been almost entirely left out from this funding stream.

The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 cleared the way for additional resources to be made available to combat the opioid crisis, and we are asking that these additional resources be targeted to those most in need and who were largely left out of the last round of funding. The deadline to sign on is **Thursday, March 8 at noon.**

Letter Text:

March 8, 2018

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member De Lauro,

In light of the recent passage of H.R. 1892, the *Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018*, we write to express our strong support for the inclusion of potentially billions of dollars in additional resources to combat the opioid crisis. With the number of Americans killed by drug overdoses nearly doubling in the last decade, it is clear that we must redouble our efforts to stop this disastrous and heartbreaking problem that is wreaking havoc on our communities and kills an average of 115 Americans every single day.^[1] That means this crisis claims nearly as many American lives in one year as the entire Korean War.

As you are aware, the *21st Century Cures Act* contained almost \$1 billion in funding for the State Targeted Response to the Opioid Crisis Grants to help fight the opioid crisis. While these grants have begun to make a difference in our communities, we want to build on this effort. We are encouraged to hear in discussions that H.R. 1892 provides room for the appropriation of an additional few billion dollars for Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019 to continue the fight against the opioid crisis and improve mental health care. We want to ensure that these funds are appropriated and specifically targeted towards the areas and populations in the most need of assistance.

Despite recent efforts to target resources to those most in need, Native Americans and native Alaskans who had 500% increase in overdose deaths—have been left out of the conversation.^[2] As you begin to appropriate the much needed additional funds to fight the opioid crisis, we ask that you target the funds towards those populations most in need including states with the highest per-capita overdose mortality rates, as well as tribal and rural areas. Please make sure that your

^[1] Rudd RA, Seth P, David F, Scholl L. [Increases in Drug and Opioid-Involved Overdose Deaths — United States, 2010–2015.](#)

^[2] https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/10/30/native-americans-among-the-most-harmed-by-the-opioid-epidemic-are-often-left-out-of-conversation/?utm_term=.4542d529861c

appropriations legislation clearly states that these funds must be targeted to the areas and populations who need it most.

Sincerely,

Martha McSally
Member of Congress

¹ Rudd RA, Seth P, David F, Scholl L. [Increases in Drug and Opioid-Involved Overdose Deaths — United States, 2010–2015](#).

² https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/10/30/native-americans-among-the-most-harmed-by-the-opioid-epidemic-are-often-left-out-of-conversation/?utm_term=.4542d529861c