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Passage of the American Rescue Plan Act – Dorothy Alther

What tribes can expect with the passing of the ARPA.

Covid-19 Resources for Tribes

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Passage of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA or ARA)—What Happens Next?

On March 11, 2021 President Biden signed into law the ARPA which includes targeted funding to address impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic on employment, health care, schools, housing, tribal, state and local governments, businesses, and for the distribution of vaccine to millions of Americans. The reach of \$31.2 trillion under ARPA is vast and also addresses areas of child poverty, homelessness, transportation, nutrition assistance, disaster response and assistance, tax credits for families, and much more. While many of these areas suffered from lack of funding and services pre-COVID-19, the pandemic exasperated the problems and brought the issues to the forefront.

Specific to Tribes and Native Americans:

- \$ 20 billion in direct funding to tribal governments to mitigate the fiscal effects stemming from the COVID pandemic.
 - \$1 billion will be allocated equally among all tribal governments;
 - Remaining \$19 billion will be allocated among all tribal governments in amounts determined by the Secretary of Treasury. (*Consultation has already begun on what formula will be used to allocate this funding. Tribes are strongly opposed to using tribal population data from the Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG) program done under the allocation of the CARES Act distribution*);
 - Payments are to be made to each tribal government within 60 days from March 11, 2021; and
 - Tribal governments must use the funds by Dec. 31, 2024 (*This is a longer deadline than under the CARES Act*).
 - Funding can be used for:
 - assistance to households;
 - small businesses and nonprofits or to impacted industries such as tourism, travel and hospitality;
 - respond to workers performing essential work during the COVID public health emergency by providing premium pay to eligible workers of tribal governments that are performing such essential work, or by providing grants to eligible employers that have eligible workers who perform essential work;
 - provide government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue due to the pandemic in the most recent full fiscal year; and
 - make necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure.

- The ARPA clearly defines a “tribal government” as the governing body of any Indian or Alaska Native tribe, band, nation, pueblo, village, community, component band or component reservation individually identified in the annual list published pursuant to the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994 (25 U.S.C. 5131) (*This was added to address the ineligibility of Alaskan Native Corporations to ARPA funds*).
- Indian Health Service \$6.094 million
- Bureau of Indian Affairs \$900 million:
 - \$100 million for tribal housing improvement;
 - \$772.5 million for tribal government services, public safety and justice, social services, child welfare assistance and other related expenses;
 - \$7.5 million for federal administrative costs and oversight; and
 - \$20 million to provide and deliver potable water.
- Housing Assistance and Supportive Services Programs for Native Americans \$750 million available until Sept. 30, 2025,
 - \$450 million is allocated for the Native American Housing Block Grant program and \$5 million for the Native Hawaiian Housing Block Grant program;
 - To prevent, prepare for and respond to COVID, including maintaining normal operations and funding affordable housing activities;
 - \$280 million is allocated for Indian Community Development Block Grants to be used to address emergencies that constitute imminent threats to health and safety and are designed to prevent, prepare for and respond to COVID;
 - \$10 million is allocated for technical assistance; and
 - \$5 million is allocated for administrative costs.
- \$20 million for grants to ensure the survival and continuing vitality of Native American languages during the COVID pandemic.
- Bureau of Indian Education \$850 million allocated by the Director of the Bureau of Indian Education for programs and activities operated or funded by the Bureau of Indian Education, for Bureau-funded schools, and for tribal colleges and universities.

Beyond the specific relief earmarked for Tribes or Native Americans, the ARPA will also benefit many Native Americans through:

- **Stimulus Checks:** The bill provides direct payments of \$1,400 up to per person for individuals earning less than \$80,000 per year, heads of households earning less than \$120,000 per year, and couples earning less than \$160,000 per year. Families will also receive an additional \$1,400 per child, although families earning more than the salary thresholds will not receive any payments, regardless of how many children they have.
- **Unemployment Assistance:** The bill provides a \$300 boost to weekly unemployment payments and extends two key unemployment benefits programs through September 6, 2021. These programs, which provide benefits to gig workers, independent contractors, and freelancers, were set to expire on March 14, 2021. The bill will also make the first \$10,200 of benefits tax-free for households with annual incomes less than \$150,000.

- **Vaccines and Testing:** ARPA provides \$14 billion for researching, developing, distributing, administering, and strengthening confidence in vaccines. It will provide \$47.8 billion for testing, contact tracing, and mitigation, especially in medically underserved areas, and it will allocate \$7.7 billion to hire 100,000 public health workers to support the coronavirus response. Lastly, it provides \$50 billion to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, with some funds going toward expanded vaccination efforts.

Now that the ARPA has passed, its implementation will be the next challenge. Those federal agencies who are responsible for allocating the funding will be moving quickly to hold consultation with Tribes and promulgating guidance on when, how and to whom funding will be released to. CILS will continue to keep you updated on the allocations process.

How Can CILS Help?

CILS staff can discuss whether the tribe is eligible for a grant and in preparing documentation.

For assistance contact the CILS office closest to your tribal location at:

Escondido Office
(760) 746-8941

Bishop Office
(760) 873-3581

Eureka Office
(707) 443-8397

Sacramento Office
(916) 978-0960

Federal and Tribal Resources:

A one-stop page collecting information related to COVID-19 can be located at:
<https://covid19.ca.gov/>

CDSS Tribal Affairs: [COVID-19 resources for California tribal communities:](https://cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/cdss-programs/tribal-affairs/tribal-affairs-covid-19)
[https://cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/cdss-programs/tribal-affairs/tribal-affairs-covid-19.](https://cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/cdss-programs/tribal-affairs/tribal-affairs-covid-19)

A one-stop page for Federal COVID-19 information:
<https://www.coronavirus.gov/>.

Indian Health Service:
<https://www.ihs.gov/coronavirus/>

Health and Human Services:
<https://www.hhs.gov/coronaviruses/index.html>

Centers for Disease Control: Providing information on how to protect yourself and what to do if you are sick. Also contains the most update-to-date information on the virus and medical news related to the virus: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019->

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response:
<https://www.phe.gov/emergency/events/COVID19/Pages/default.aspx>

NCAI: <http://www.ncai.org/covid-19>

TPLI: <https://www.home.tlpi.org/covid-19>

NIWRC: <https://www.niwrc.org/news/resources-response-coronavirus-covid-19>

NICWA: <https://www.nicwa.org/coronavirus/>

NIHB: <https://www.nihb.org/covid-19/>

Turtletalk: <https://turtletalk.blog/covid-19-tribal-documents/> and <https://turtletalk.blog/tag/covid-19/>

NAFOA: https://nafoa.org/coronavirus?utm_source=Nafoa+Mailing+List&utm_campaign=09967d5081-newsletter-33020&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_dcd537bb2-09967d5081-58514507