

General Council meeting
11 a.m. Sunday, June 28
Tribal Council nominations
Tribal members can watch remotely through the Tribal website.

NOTICE — Monthly Tribal Council Wednesday Meetings

DATE	TIME
Wednesday, June 24.....	10 a.m.
Wednesday, July 8.....	10 a.m.
Wednesday, July 22.....	10 a.m.

Please note that these times and dates are subject to change if needed.

Wyden questions CARES Act funding to Tribes

By Dean Rhodes
Smoke Signals editor

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden joined other Senate colleagues in questioning the Trump administration’s formula used to allocate payments to Native American Tribes from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act on Friday, May 29.

In a letter, the senators asked Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin to ensure that the disbursement formula is fully transparent and that all Tribes receive adequate funds to protect the health and safety of their peoples.

A Harvard study found that the Treasury and Interior departments used Housing and Urban Development population data instead of enrollment data submitted by Tribes when it allocated the initial \$4.8 billion in CARES Act funding and that might have resulted in an inaccurate and unfair distribution.

According to the Harvard study, all nine Oregon Tribes received more money than they would have if Treasury had used Tribally submitted enrollment numbers that were required to participate in the CARES Act funding.

For instance, the Harvard study estimated that the Grand Ronde Tribe would have received \$11.57 million instead of the estimated \$32.94 million that Treasury’s allocation formula resulted in.

On May 5, Mnuchin and Interior Secretary David Bernhardt announced that the federal government was using Housing and Urban Development Indian Housing Block Grant population figures as the dataset for distributing CARES Act funds.

“Since this announcement, we have received reports that call into question the validity ... and raise the possibility that Treasury inaccurately calculated the first round of Tribal allocation payments,” the senators said.

Treasury has not provided an explanation of how it accounted for Tribes not included in the IHGB population data or addressed its reliance on HUD’s population figures without prior consultation with Tribes. Treasury also had not released a list of Tribes and the amount of CARES Act funds they received.

Congress allocated \$8 billion

to Tribes in late March, but a court ruled later that some of the money should be held for Alaska Native corporations in case they are deemed eligible. The ruling, however, allowed Treasury to start distributing 60 percent of the funding to federally recognized Tribes.

Treasury used population data from the Indian Housing Block Grant program to determine Tribal allocations despite the fact that Tribes provided up-to-date enrollment numbers in applying for CARES Act funding.

Treasury requested that Tribes certify their enrollment citizenship populations as of Jan. 1 upon registering for CARES Act funds before the April 17 deadline. To qualify, Tribes were asked how many enrolled citizens they have, how many acres of land they own and how many people they employ. The departments of Interior and Treasury told Tribes that they needed the data to determine the allocations to each Tribe.

“Given Treasury’s determination that ‘Tribal population is expected to correlate reasonably well with the amount of increased expenditures of Tribal governments related directly to the public health emergency,’ it is critically important that the population numbers it relied on are as accurate as possible,” the senators wrote. “While Treasury has provided Tribes an opportunity to review the underlying IHGB dataset, Treasury has not published any modifications to the dataset to allow Tribes affected by the issues above to provide feedback and correct any potential errors or inaccuracies.”

While Oregon’s nine federally recognized Tribes benefitted cumulatively by more than \$90 million in the initial disbursement of CARES Act funds, other Tribes received the minimum allocation of \$100,000 because they did not participate in the housing program.

For instance, the Delaware Tribe of Indians in Oklahoma received the minimum disbursement of \$100,000 because it was listed by Treasury as having zero citizens despite the Tribe having an enrolled membership of approximately 11,000 members, resulting in an estimated loss of \$23.4 million in CARES Act funding. ■

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DEADLINE DATE	ISSUE DATE
MONDAY, JUNE 22.....	JULY 1, 2020
MONDAY, JULY 6.....	JULY 15, 2020
MONDAY, JULY 20.....	AUG. 1, 2020
WEDNESDAY, AUG. 5.....	AUG. 15, 2020
FRIDAY, AUG. 21.....	SEPT. 1, 2020

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