

Secretary Napolitano Unveils DHS Tribal Consultation and Coordination Plan

On March 1, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano unveiled the Department's initiative for increased consultation and coordination with federally recognized tribes across the United States – building on current tribal partnerships to protect the safety and security of all people on tribal lands and throughout the nation.

“The United States values the government-to-government relationship we have with tribes, and we are committed to working together to ensure our mutual security,” said Secretary Napolitano. “Enhancing our partnerships with tribal governments will streamline information sharing and foster a culture of collaboration between the Department and tribal nations in developing policies that have tribal implications.”

DHS solicited feedback from all 564 federally recognized tribes on the initial plan. The plan, which can be viewed at www.dhs.gov, commits to: Hiring a dedicated tribal liaison in the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs to serve as a central point of contact for tribal governments and coordinate the work of the tribal liaisons across the department; dedicating staff resources to tribal engagement and enhancing training for DHS tribal liaisons and other employees that regularly engage tribal governments and representatives; promoting the incorporation of tribal public safety and law enforcement agencies into state and local fusion centers; developing a Tribal Resource Guide for tribal leadership highlighting pertinent DHS programs and initiatives; collaborating with tribal governments in the development of DHS policies that have tribal implications; and working across the federal government to formalize a “one

stop shop” for tribal governments for emergency management mitigation, planning, response and recovery efforts.

The plan of action was created in response to President Obama's Memorandum on Tribal Consultation – signed on Nov. 5, 2009, at the White House Tribal Nations Conference – which called on departments and agencies across the federal government to engage tribal officials in regular and meaningful collaboration.

This plan expands Secretary Napolitano's ongoing commitment to close coordination with tribal partners across the nation on security initiatives, and builds on the first-ever Department-wide Tribal Consultation Policy announced by Secretary Napolitano in 2009, which ensures direct involvement of Indian tribes in developing regulatory policies, recommending grant procedures for tribes, and advising on key issues. She also directed every Component and Office in the Department to identify a dedicated tribal liaison or point of contact.

DHS also formalized agreements with the Tohono O'odham Nation of Arizona, the Seneca Nation of Indians, the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho and the Pascua Yaqui of Arizona to develop Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative compliant Enhanced Tribal Cards – which verify identity, tribal membership and citizenship for the purpose of entering the United States by land or sea – enhancing safety and security of U.S. borders while facilitating legitimate travel and trade. CBP is currently working with approximately 25 additional tribes across the country on this initiative.

For more information, visit www.dhs.gov.

USDA, American Indian Higher Education Consortium, Sign Agreement to Increase Cooperation

The USDA Secretary Vilsack signed an updated Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on February 25 to promote increased cooperation between USDA, tribally controlled colleges and universities (TCUs), and American Indian/Alaska Native communities. The MOA reaffirms the partnership between AIHEC and USDA to assist in fulfilling the 2002 Farm Bill's mandate that USDA establish programs ensuring that TCUs and American Indian/Alaska Native communities participate equitably in USDA employment, programs, and activities.

“This MOA is an important step forward in our efforts to expand cooperation and consultation between USDA and tribal colleges,” said Vilsack. “The Obama administration is committed to supporting the critical role tribal colleges have played in improving the lives of Native Americans, and to ensuring that they enjoy full access to USDA programs and services.”

The parties will focus on strengthening the capacities of AIHEC member institutions and supporting their full integration into USDA programs and services, as well as the Land-Grant System and its programs. The agreement will also promote food and agricultural science careers and professional attainment among students attending AIHEC member institutions, promote employment opportunities within USDA

for students attending AIHEC member institutions, and support the development of AIHEC. The first agreement was signed in 1998 and was updated in 2008.

This agreement reflects the commitment of the parties to further USDA's outreach efforts with the 1994 Land-Grant Institutions and the communities served by these institutions. The agreement is being guided by the values outlined in the Obama Administration – transparency, participation and cooperation.

The MOA is an extension of President Obama's prior recognition of the importance of tribal colleges. The renewed USDA and AIHEC MOA acknowledges the role of 1994 TCUs to the nation's food security and to tribal self-determination through their cultural and other science-based educational programs that function to improve local economies, re-invigorate the use of ancestral foods to address nutritional issues that lead to diabetes and obesity, and to develop energy programs that have the potential to benefit all Americans. In November 2009, senior USDA officials met with tribal leaders and members from across the country to expand cooperation and consultation between the Department of Agriculture and tribal nations. ♣