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## State-Tribal Relations Committee

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### 65th Montana Legislature

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LAURA SANKEY KEIP, Staff Attorney  
LAURA SHERLEY, Secretary

July 6, 2018

Doug Noseep, District V Commander  
Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Justice Services  
2021 4th Ave. N  
Suite 406  
Billings, MT 59101

Dear Mr. Noseep,

The Montana Legislature's State-Tribal Relations Committee (STRC) held a panel discussion in Great Falls on May 9 with state, federal, and tribal representatives talking about issues related to enforcement and investigation of drug crimes, missing persons, human trafficking, and violence against women in Indian Country. As an integral enforcement agency in Indian Country, it is unfortunate the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) could not participate in this productive meeting.

The STRC writes to ask that the BIA better address myriad issues related to enforcement in Indian Country, ranging from improving coordination with state, federal, and tribal partners to increasing internal efficiency. For instance, lengthy and delayed BIA hiring processes exacerbate law enforcement vacancy rates on reservations. Qualified candidates drop out before positions can be filled. Employee background checks are backlogged. These delays compromise public safety.

Regarding improved coordination, the STRC has heard anecdotally about confusion in determining who has jurisdiction over crimes in Indian Country and the perception that law enforcement responses are slow or inadequate. The STRC is considering legislation to require all law enforcement authorities within Montana to accept any report of a missing person without delay unless there are extenuating circumstances. While the Montana Legislature cannot compel tribal or federal authorities to comply, the proposal encourages all authorities to work cooperatively to report and investigate missing persons cases in the state.

The STRC supports S. 1942, sponsored by U.S. Senator Heidi Heitkamp, which directs the U.S. Attorney General to improve interjurisdictional cooperation, response rates, and follow-up for cases of missing and murdered Indians, and to review existing law enforcement and justice protocols to develop standardized, written protocols for the investigation of these cases and the responsibilities of each federal partner.

The STRC also supports S. 1870, sponsored by U.S. Senator John Hoeven, which would dedicate 5% of the Crime Victims Fund for the next 10 years to support tribal victim assistance programs. We think this targeted use of resources is appropriate since American Indians experience violence at a rate that is more than twice the national average. However, we also ask why federal agencies are not doing more to combat these crimes in Indian Country to prevent victimization in the first place.

Mr. Noseep, the STRC appreciates your attention to these matters and hopes you will respond to our concerns. We meet again on September 7 in Helena and welcome your attendance to talk more about these issues. Please contact our staff, Hope Stockwell, at [hstockwell@mt.gov](mailto:hstockwell@mt.gov) or 406-444-9280 to discuss this possibility.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sharon Stewart-Peregoy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Rep. Sharon Stewart-Peregoy, Chair

cc: U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke  
U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions  
U.S. Senator Steve Daines  
U.S. Senator Jon Tester  
U.S. Representative Greg Gianforte  
U.S. Senator John Hoeven  
U.S. Senator Heidi Heitkamp  
U.S. Attorney Kurt Alme  
Acting FBI Supervisory Senior Resident Agent Steve Lowe  
Montana Attorney General Tim Fox

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