

**NEWS from Congressman John W. Olver (MA-1)**  
**Chair, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing**  
**and Urban Development**

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**Opening Statement of Chairman John W. Olver**  
**Housing & Transportation Challenges within Native American**  
**Communities and the FY 2011 Budget Request**  
**2:00 pm, March 24, 2010**

It is an unfortunate fact that I am able to state without hyperbole that the condition of housing and transportation infrastructure on many Indian reservations is appalling. In 2003, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights estimated that there was an immediate need for 200,000 units of new housing within Indian communities and that more than one out of five Native Americans experience severe housing needs. Conversely, billions in backlogged maintenance on Indian roads and bridges contribute to a fatality rate that is more than three times the national average.

In order to help us understand how the federal government can better address the basic needs of tribal communities, we will be hearing testimony on the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Transportation's respective fiscal year 2011 budget

requests related to funding in Indian Country. Specifically I'd like to welcome:

- Sandra Henriquez, HUD, Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing;
- Rodger Boyd, HUD, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Native American Programs;
- Gregory Nadeau, DOT, Deputy Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration
- John Baxter, DOT, Associate Administrator for Federal Lands Highway Program; and
- Jefferson Keel, President, National Congress of the American Indians;

First and foremost I am interested in hearing what progress we have made with the funds provided for your programs in the Recovery Act. I would like to hear about where we are with distributing these funds and how they are meeting the great need out in Indian Country. I am also interested in hearing about what insight you have gained from these

funds, especially with the quick obligation timelines and the competition for funds in the Native American Housing Block Grant. I would particularly like to hear about any lessons learned that can now be applied to your regular programs.

Second, this Subcommittee required that HUD use some of its funding for the Transformation Initiative to conduct a new housing assessment of Native American communities. This data is crucial to understanding the need as well as how to better focus federal investments to ensure tribal authorities deliver quality projects on time and without waste. Another item I look forward to seeing from the Transformation Initiative is HUD's study and demonstration on the use of sustainable building practices on Native American lands.

In addition, I look forward to discussing how HUD and DOT can provide technical assistance to build the capacity of tribal agencies. It is oftentimes the tribes that are most in need of federal transportation and housing resources that tend to have the most difficulty submitting grant applications and successfully managing projects due to a lack of expertise or fiscal resources.

Finally, I want to express my concern that HUD's budget request proposes cutting Native American Block Grants by \$120 million or

roughly 17%. This Subcommittee has repeatedly stated its strong commitment to the program and believes there are significant opportunities to address infrastructure deficiencies and reduce high unemployment rates.