

Department of the Interior

Departmental Manual

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Part 109: Secretarial Officers

Chapter 8: Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs

Originating Office: Office of Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs

109 DM 8

8.1 **General.** The Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs discharges the duties of the Secretary with the authority and direct responsibility to strengthen the government-to-government relationship with Indian tribes; advocate policies that support Indian Self-Determination; protect and preserve Indian trust assets; and administer a wide array of laws, regulations, and functions relating to Indian tribes, Alaska Natives, individual Indian tribal members, and Indian affairs that are vested in the Secretary by the President and the Congress of the United States. The position of the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs is established under the authority contained in 43 U.S.C. 1453.

8.2 **Executive Authority.** Subject to the authority of the Secretary under 200 DM 1.9, the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs exercises Secretarial direction and leadership over the Office of the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Office of Indian Education Programs.

8.3 **Responsibilities.** The Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs is responsible for:

- A. Maximizing the effectiveness of program operations by identifying goals, providing direction, and establishing accountability for assigned functional areas.
- B. Serving as the primary Departmental contact for the development and review of policy proposals and for interpreting established policies related to Indian affairs.
- C. Recommending proposed legislation and approving regulations, as appropriate, for assigned programs; reviewing legislative and regulatory proposals for consistency with approved policy; and overseeing implementation of laws and regulations.
- D. Ensuring that program goals are consistent with Departmental objectives and that results are measured against the goals.

E. Conducting appropriate consultation with Indian tribes, heads of bureaus and offices, the Secretary, the Solicitor, and other officials within the Office of the Secretary, the Office of Management and Budget, other governmental agencies, Congress, and the public.

8.4 Scope of Activities. In carrying out the responsibilities contained in paragraph 8.3 above, the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs:

A. Submits proposals for consideration by the Secretary that are designed to strengthen the management of Indian affairs, improve the conditions of Indian communities, support tribal governments, and meet the trust obligations of the Federal Government.

B. Exercises oversight of policy development, operations, and effectiveness of interagency and interdisciplinary programs involving issues related to assigned program functions.

C. Establishes program priorities based on Secretarial policies, demonstrated effectiveness of existing programs, and current or impending program problems and needs; and makes recommendations for allocating personnel, resources, and functions using recommendations of subordinate organizations.

D. Provides leadership for special projects to explore or develop, for Secretarial approval, policies and programs resulting from proposals made by Indian tribes, civic and industry groups, State governments, legislators, and other Departments of the Executive Branch, foreign governments, and international bodies that bear upon or affect assigned program functions.

E. Represents the Secretary in interpreting and communicating assigned program activities to various groups and to the general public; maintains liaison with Members of Congress and committee staffs, and testifies before Congressional committees on budgetary matters and legislative proposals; represents the Department in contacts with Indian tribal governments, other Federal agencies, State and local governments, and various private users and public interest groups; and solicits and uses, as appropriate, information related to assigned program areas from external sources.

F. Assigns responsibility for the execution, within available resources, of all laws and Executive orders imposing obligations on the Secretary for assigned programs.

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