

## Department of the Interior Departmental Manual

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**Series:** Organization

**Part 109:** Secretarial Officers

**Chapter 8:** Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs

**Originating Office:** Office of Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs

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### 109 DM 8

**8.1 Program Assignments.** The Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs (AS-IA) discharges the duties of the Secretary of the Interior (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. Subject to the authority of the Secretary under 200 DM 1.9 and 209 DM 8, the AS-IA exercises Secretarial direction and leadership over the Office of the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), and the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration (BTFA) (collectively “Indian Affairs (IA)”). The position of the AS-IA is established under the authority contained in 43 U.S.C. § 1453.

**8.2 Executive Authority.** The Snyder Act of 1921 (25 U.S.C. § 13) provided substantive law for appropriations covering the conduct of activities in IA. The scope and character of those authorizations were broadened by: the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 (25 U.S.C. § 5101 et seq.), the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975, as amended (25 U.S.C. § 5301 et seq.), the Tribal Self-Governance Act (25 U.S.C. § 5361 et seq.), and the Education Amendments of 1978, as amended (25 U.S.C. § 2001 et seq.). Additionally, through the American Indian Trust Fund Management Reform Act of 1994 (25 U.S.C. § 4001 et seq.), the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST) was created to improve the accountability and management of Indian funds held in trust by the Federal Government. As trustee, the Department has the primary fiduciary responsibility to manage both Tribal trust funds and Individual Indian Money (IIM) accounts. As part of the implementation of the Indian Trust

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Asset Reform Act (ITARA) (25 U.S.C. § 5634(a)), the financial operations and functions performed by OST were transferred to the BTFA, which was officially established on October 1, 2020, with the BTFA reporting to the AS-IA as one of its three Bureaus.

**8.3 General Responsibilities.** The AS-IA 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 IA.
- C. Serving as co-chair of the Self-Governance Advisory Committee (SGAC) and the Tribal Interior Budget Committee (TIBC).
- D. 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.
- E. Ensuring that program goals are consistent with Departmental objectives and that results are measured against the goals.
- F. Conducting appropriate consultation with Indian Tribes, heads of Departmental 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 AS-IA:

- A. Submits proposals for consideration by the Secretary that are designed to strengthen the management of IA, 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 Government 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.