

**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 1, 2020

The Honorable Mark Lee Greenblatt  
Inspector General  
Office of Inspector General  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street N.W  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Greenblatt:

In the recent Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act relief package, Congress set aside \$8 billion in funds to help tribal governments respond to the current pandemic and continue essential government services.<sup>1</sup> To guide the disbursement of these funds, the Department of the Treasury consulted with Department of the Interior (DOI) Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Tara Sweeney. In the course of this process, Assistant Secretary Sweeney recommended a dubious interpretation of the CARES Act language that would make Alaska Native Corporations (ANCs) eligible for the \$8 billion.<sup>2</sup> Unlike federally recognized tribal governments, ANCs are for-profit companies that continue to receive revenue during the pandemic and are eligible to apply for funding under other legislative provisions.

Assistant Secretary Sweeney previously served as vice president for the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, the largest ANC in terms of revenue, of which she remains a shareholder. Her active financial interest in Arctic Slope raises questions about whether her involvement in determining ANCs would be eligible for CARES Act funding specifically intended for federally recognized tribal governments violated ethics rules and/or pledges.

In addition, it was recently reported that DOI released sensitive data from tribal governments' CARES Act applications to the ANCs in an allegedly improper manner and/or for improper reasons.<sup>3</sup>

The Committee requests the DOI Office of Inspector General conduct an investigation into these matters, including but not necessarily limited to the following:

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<sup>1</sup> Pub. L. No. 116-136, § 5001.

<sup>2</sup> Agoyo, A, *Alaska Native corporations in line for billions in coronavirus relief promised to tribes*, INDIANZ (Apr. 14, 2020), <https://www.indianz.com/News/2020/04/14/alaska-native-corporations-in-line-for-b.asp>

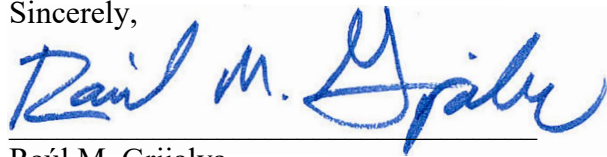
<sup>3</sup> Rickert, L, *Cares act tribal data breached: One observer calls it Indian Country's 'Watergate'*, NATIVE NEWS ONLINE (Apr. 19, 2020), <https://nativenewsonline.net/currents/cares-act-tribal-data-breached-one-observer-calls-it-indian-countrys-watergate/>

1. Whether Assistant Secretary Sweeney violated any ethics rules, regulations, laws, or pledges regarding her involvement in CARES Act relief administration, specifically as it relates to the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation and/or other ANCs;
2. Whether any DOI components or employees, including Assistant Secretary Sweeney, committed any legal violations, ethics or otherwise, in causing, encouraging, or allowing the disclosure of CARES Act-related information to other parties.

Considering the collaborative nature of DOI and the Department of the Treasury's work on disseminating CARES Act funding to federally recognized Tribal governments, the Committee encourages DOI OIG to work jointly with Treasury OIG and other potentially relevant federal oversight bodies on these issues, to the extent necessary and appropriate.

For more information regarding this request please contact my staff, Chris Martinez, Counsel for the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations at [Chris.Martinez@mail.house.gov](mailto:Chris.Martinez@mail.house.gov) and Naomi Miguel, Professional Staff for the Subcommittee on Indigenous Peoples at [Naomi.Miguel@mail.house.gov](mailto:Naomi.Miguel@mail.house.gov). Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva  
Chair  
House Committee on Natural Resources



Ruben Gallego  
Chair  
Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the  
United States



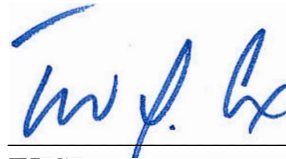
Deb Haaland  
Chair  
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests,  
and Public Lands



Alan Lowenthal  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral  
Resources



Jared Huffman  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and  
Wildlife



TJ Cox  
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