



Save the Date and Call for Public Comments

U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Virtual Public Briefing: Assessing COVID-19 and the Broken Promises to Native Americans

July 17, 2020, 10:00 a.m. EDT

Virtual Public Briefing

On Friday, July 17, at 10 a.m. EDT, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights will hold a virtual public briefing to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 on Native Americans. In 2018, the Commission issued [*Broken Promises: Continuing Federal Funding Shortfall for Native Americans*](#), a comprehensive report that addressed the inadequacy of federal funding for Native American programs despite the United States' trust responsibility to promote tribal self-government, support the general wellbeing of Native American tribes and villages, and to protect their land and resources.

The Commission will hear testimony from experts on how the pandemic has impacted Native American communities with respect to healthcare, housing, and infrastructure components such as access to water and broadband, and whether the federal government is meeting its obligations to Native American people in this current crisis.

Submission of Comments

The Commission also invites the public to submit oral and written materials for consideration now through July 24, 2020. Please submit such information to BrokenPromises@usccr.gov or by mail to: OCRE/Public Comments, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1331 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Suite 1150, Washington, DC 20425. Please address the following questions:

1. *Broken Promises* found that Native Americans experience distinct health disparities as compared to other Americans which are compounded by Native American healthcare programs being chronically underfunded. How has the outbreak of COVID-19 impacted these health disparities?
2. *Broken Promises* found that there is a severe lack of affordable housing and adequate physical infrastructure in Indian Country. Due to a lack of federal investment in affordable housing and infrastructure such as roads, water, sewer, and electricity, Native Americans often find themselves living in overcrowded housing without basic utilities and infrastructure. What have been the consequences of these disparities in housing conditions and access to infrastructure during the outbreak of COVID-19?
3. *Broken Promises* found that telecommunications infrastructure, especially wireless and broadband internet services, is often inaccessible to many Native Americans in Indian

Country. These services are necessary to keep the community connected to telehealth services, remote education, economic development, and public safety. Has this lack of telecommunications created additional barriers for Native Americans in coping with and reacting to the pandemic?

4. Have the congressional responses to the pandemic – especially the passage of the CARES Act and other stimulus packages – done enough to help Native people with the challenges posed by COVID-19?
5. Has the Executive Branch’s responses to the pandemic – including its statutory interpretation and administrative implementation of laws passed by Congress – done enough to help Native peoples cope with the challenges passed by Congress?
6. What recommendations should the Commission make to Congress and the federal government to ensure that Native American communities can address the coronavirus pandemic?

Stay tuned for updates and additional information at www.usccr.gov and on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).