

BIDEN-HARRIS PLAN FOR TRIBAL NATIONS

The United States of America was founded on the notion of equality for all. We've always strived to meet that ideal, but never fully lived up to it. Throughout our history, this promise has been denied to Native Americans who have lived on this land since time immemorial. And the pandemic highlighted this long history of inequity as it devastated tribal nations — Native Americans contracted the disease at 3.5 times the rate of white Americans, and in some states, they are dying at a rate five times their population share.

Joe Biden and Kamala Harris are committed to upholding the U.S.'s trust responsibility to tribal nations, strengthening the Nation-to-Nation relationship between the United States and Indian tribes, and working to empower tribal nations to govern their own communities and make their own decisions. With over 574 federally recognized Native American tribes in the United States, the Biden-Harris plan will:

- Strengthen the Nation-to-Nation relationship
- Provide reliable, affordable, quality health care and address health disparities
- Restore tribal lands, address climate change, and safeguard natural and cultural resources
- Ensure Native communities are safer and tackle the crisis of violence against Native women, children, and the elderly
- Expand economic opportunity and community development in Native communities
- Invest in education and youth engagement
- Meet obligations to and commemorate Native veterans
- Ensure Native Americans can exercise their right to vote

STRENGTHEN THE NATION-TO-NATION RELATIONSHIP

Joe Biden understands that tribal sovereignty and self-governance, as well as honoring the federal trust responsibility to Tribal Nations, should be the cornerstones of federal Indian policy. As President, Biden will build on the efforts of the Obama-Biden Administration, which were instrumental in rebuilding trust, good faith, and respect for the tribal-federal relationship. Biden will ensure tribes have a seat at the table at the highest levels of the federal government and a voice throughout the government. He will:

- **Immediately reinstate the annual White House Tribal Nations Conference and leverage the White House Council on Native American Affairs**, which the Obama-Biden Administration created. The Trump Administration took three years to reinstate the White House Council on Native American Affairs, and still has not held a White House Tribal Nations Conference.
- **Appoint Native Americans to high-level government positions.** Not only did the Obama-Biden Administration appoint Native Americans to traditionally-held positions, like Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs and Director of Indian Health Service, they appointed Native Americans to many positions across government, including Deputy Secretary of the Interior, senior roles in the White House Domestic Policy Council and the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland and the first Native female judge

to a U.S. District Court. Biden will build on the Obama-Biden Administration's record by ensuring tribal nations have a strong voice and role in the federal government.

- **Nominate judges who understand federal Indian law**, respect tribal sovereignty, and will uphold both our treaties and the U.S Constitution.
- **Ensure fulfillment of federal trust and treaty obligations including by working to address chronic underfunding of unmet federal obligations to Indian Country.** Biden will launch a budget task force under the White House Council on Native American Affairs and Office of Management and Budget (OMB), in consultation with tribes, that seeks to understand chronic funding shortfalls and deliver recommendations to fully fund the federal government's trust and treaty obligations. This work will include reviewing the ability to make Indian Country funding advanced or mandatory, instead of discretionary to provide tribes with the certainty and predictability they need.
- **Promote robust and meaningful consultation with Tribal Nations.** Biden will immediately reinstate the Executive Departments and Agencies Consultation mandate that was in place throughout the Obama-Biden Administration and hold agencies accountable for meeting consultation obligations. Biden will ensure that tribal consultations adopt best practices consistent with principles reflected in the RESPECT Act, including requiring substantive engagement with tribes, ensuring that consultation policies are consistent across federal agencies and encouraging independent agencies to establish them as well.
- **Defend the Indian Child Welfare Act.** According to the National Indian Child Welfare Association, studies have found that "Indian families were two times more likely to be investigated and four times more likely to have their children removed and placed in foster care than their white counterparts." Biden will fight to defend and fully implement the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978, a law that he was proud to support and that established standards for the placement of Native American children in foster and adoptive homes and sought to protect Native families and involve Tribes in child welfare cases.
- **Strengthen self-governance.** One of Biden's earliest votes as a senator was to support the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, which honored tribal sovereignty by allowing tribes to provide services for their members that the federal government had previously provided. A Biden Administration will work with tribes to explore ways to expand self-governance opportunities.

PROVIDE RELIABLE, AFFORDABLE, QUALITY HEALTH CARE AND TACKLE HEALTH CARE DISPARITIES

As President Trump knowingly and willingly lied to the American people about the seriousness of the coronavirus and failed to do his job — on purpose — the disease devastated Native Americans. Some tribal communities have faced among the highest per capita infection rates in the country. When accounting for age, Native Americans are 3.3 times more likely to die from the virus than white Americans. Even before the pandemic, Native Americans had a 5.5 years shorter life expectancy than the average American and suffered from higher rates of chronic diseases, including diabetes, heart disease, and asthma. They are also more likely to be uninsured than any other racial or ethnic group. As President, Biden will ensure that every Native

American has access to quality, affordable health care and honor the federal government's treaty and trust responsibility to provide health care services to Native Americans. Biden will:

- **Increase and ensure stable funding for the Indian Health Service.** The Indian Health Service (IHS) has been underfunded for decades. And, as the only major federally funded health care provider that does not receive advance appropriations or significant mandatory funding, the IHS consistently faces the uncertainty of the federal budget process. Biden has called for dramatically increasing funding for IHS and making that funding mandatory.
- **Ensure access to health coverage.** Under the Obama-Biden Administration, the Affordable Care Act made permanent the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA), the cornerstone legal authority for the provision of health care to Native Americans. As a result of the ACA, the uninsured rate among Native Americans dropped from more than 30% to 22% between 2010 and 2017. And, because of the Affordable Care Act, the uninsured rate for Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders dropped from 18% to 11% during the same time period. Now, in the middle of a pandemic, Trump is trying to strip away the entire law. Biden will build on Obamacare, providing a new public health insurance option like Medicare and ensure the individuals who would be eligible for Medicaid but for their state's inaction are automatically enrolled on to the public option, at no cost to the individual. Biden will also protect Medicaid from Trump's proposals to drastically cut it and weaken it through work requirements. And he'll protect Medicare and lower the eligibility age to 60.
- **Lead a decisive public health response to COVID-19.** Biden knows how to mount an effective crisis response and elevate the voices of scientists, public health experts, and first responders because he has done it before. He knows how critical it is to partner with tribal nations and elevate the voices of tribal public health experts. As President, he will ensure wide availability of free testing and eliminate cost barriers to preventative care and treatment for COVID-19 — ensuring Native Americans are not left behind. He'll fight for the development of a safe and effective vaccine and the full production and fair distribution of necessary supplies. And, he'll ensure that reopening decisions by tribal governments are respected. Biden will also provide IHS, tribal health authorities, and urban Indian organizations guaranteed access to the Strategic National Stockpile and provide tribes access to federal grants that help public health facilities surge capacity and response timelines. And, he's called on Congress to immediately enact Senator Kamala Harris' bill to create a task force to address the racial disparities that have been laid bare by this pandemic. As President, he will do everything in his power to eliminate health care disparities.
- **Expand the pipeline of health care providers in tribal communities.** The IHS does not have enough doctors or nurses to provide necessary care for Native Americans. Biden will expand the reach of the Indian Health Service Programs designed to provide scholarships and practical experience to individuals willing to work in high-demand areas, while training health professionals that reflect the culture of their community. In addition, Biden will invest a more than \$70 billion investment in Tribal Colleges and Universities, HBCUs, and other Minority Serving Institutions, including in graduate health programs, invest in new jobs for community health workers, engage in a national strategy to recruit, retain and empower nursing professionals, and take additional steps to expand the pipeline of rural health care providers.
- **Deploy telehealth throughout Indian Country.** Many Native Americans lack access to health care because of the remote, rural locations where they live – where the nearest

emergency room can be hours away. Biden will provide funding to health care facilities serving rural areas and in tribal communities to encourage the use of telemedicine and ensure that providers are properly trained to provide quality care via telemedicine.

- **Reduce our unacceptably high maternal mortality rate, which disproportionately impacts Native mothers.** From 2007 to 2016 Native women were 2.3 times more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications than white women. California came up with a strategy that halved the state’s maternal death rate. As President, Biden will reduce our unacceptably high maternal mortality rate, starting by taking the California strategy nationwide.
- **Reauthorize and expand the Special Diabetes Program for Indians.** Native Americans are more likely to have diabetes than any other race. Since the Special Diabetes Program for Indians was established, diabetes-related kidney failure among Native Americans has fallen by more than half.
- **Expand access to mental health and substance use disorder treatment.** Biden will defend the Affordable Care Act, which expanded coverage and required insurers to cover substance disorder and mental health services as essential health benefits, enforce mental health parity laws, and eliminate the stigma around mental health. He will tackle the opioid crisis and substance use disorders with \$125 billion investment in prevention, treatment, recovery, and harm reduction.
- **Help prevent suicides.** Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 10-34 year old Native Americans. Biden will direct the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to work with tribes to research and collect data on the epidemic of suicide amongst Native American youth in order to strengthen suicide prevention efforts, and will increase resources for current suicide prevention efforts, including programs like the Garrett Lee Smith State/Tribal Youth Suicide Prevention and Early Intervention Grant Program.
- **Tackle social determinants of health.** Biden will take steps to make sure that families have access to child care, jobs that have safe and fair conditions, a living wage, clean air and water, and mental health support – communities where children and families will thrive. He will also expand access to healthy foods, while also promoting tribal self-governance by directing his U.S. Department of Agriculture to enter into 638 self-determination agreements with tribal governments that are prepared and wish to administer federal nutrition assistance programs like the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations.
- **Increase Native health data collection and sharing to improve health outcomes.** During the pandemic, the Trump Administration refused to share health data with tribal public health agencies that they were sharing with state public health agencies — hindering tribes’ ability to respond to the crisis. Biden will direct the Centers for Disease Control and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to share data with tribes and encourage states to do the same. He will also direct HHS and CDC to work with states and tribes to increase data sharing across the board, while honoring tribal sovereignty, so that they can more easily analyze the impacts of policy interventions and work to improve health outcomes.

Read Biden’s full health care plan at joebiden.com/healthcare and his full plan to tackle the opioid crisis at joebiden.com/opioidcrisis.

RESTORE TRIBAL LANDS, ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE, AND SAFEGUARD NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Tribal homelands are at the heart of tribal sovereignty and self-governance. As President, Biden will restore lands and protect the natural and cultural resources within them, while honoring the role of tribal governments in protecting those resources. He will:

- **Make it easier to place land into trust.** One of the most important roles the federal government plays in rebuilding the nation-to-nation relationship is placing land into trust on behalf of tribes -- it is critical for tribal sovereignty and self-determination, preserves tribal histories and culture for future generations, spurs economic development, supports the well-being of tribal citizens, and, critically, helps to right the wrongs of past policy. The Obama-Biden Administration recognized this vital responsibility and took 542,000 acres of land into trust for tribes — including land that the Trump Administration then tried to take away from the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe. As President, Biden will uphold trust and treaty responsibilities and continue to place land into trust for Indian tribes. The U.S. Supreme Court’s *Carciere* decision made fulfilling that responsibility harder by restricting the federal government’s ability to put land into trust. The Obama-Biden Administration developed a framework to support this, which was used by the Department of Justice to defend the process of taking land into trust. But the Trump Administration has callously reversed the Obama-Biden policies, and abandoned our nation’s treaty obligations to tribal nations. Biden will call on Congress to enact a clean *Carciere* fix to make it easier to place land into trust. And, he will end Trump’s reversal of the Obama-Biden policy that affirmed that Alaska Native tribes are rightfully able to place land into trust.
- **Protect Native homelands.** As President, Biden will work to uphold the United States’ promises to tribes by defending federally-recognized tribal homelands and will support efforts to protect and secure reservation boundaries. In the critical *McGirt v. Oklahoma* decision in July, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the federal government’s treaty responsibilities to protect homelands in Indian Country. Instead of working with tribes to ensure public safety and justice for victims of crimes in the area, the Trump Administration expanded its efforts to oppose tribes in the case and threaten tribal homelands. Biden stands with tribes, not against them.
- **Respect Land Sovereignty and Tribal Rights.** Biden will uphold leasing and right-of-way regulations that strengthen tribal sovereignty and ensure tribal consent on tribal lands. He will create a more robust and meaningful consultation process that is consistent across all federal agencies, including the Office of Management and Budget, and use early and ongoing consultation to identify and work to appropriately mitigate or address concerns with federal actions and undertakings that could impact tribal rights and interests.
- **Protect natural and cultural treasures.** As President, Biden will take immediate steps to reverse the Trump administration’s assaults on America’s natural treasures, including by reversing Trump’s attacks on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Bears Ears, and Grand Staircase-Escalante. On Day 1, Biden will also begin building on the Obama-Biden Administration’s historic conservation efforts by issuing an executive order to conserve 30% of America’s lands and waters by 2030, focusing on the most ecologically important lands and waters. His administration will work with tribal governments and Congress to protect

sacred sites and public lands and waters with high conservation and cultural values. And, he will provide tribes with a greater role in the care and management of public lands that are of cultural significance to Tribal Nations.

- **Immediately and ambitiously address climate change and its impacts on Indian Country.** Climate change poses an existential threat – not just to our environment, but to our health, our communities, our national security, and our economic well-being, and the cultures of Native Americans that are closely tied to the land. And, it poses particular threats to indigenous tribes, from those that have to relocate because of erosion and rising sea levels on the coasts to those across the entire country experiencing varied impacts including droughts, flooding, wildfires, and changes in biodiversity that threaten their economic dependence on their land and water, as well as traditional subsistence activities critical to the survival of many tribal communities. And 40% of the federally recognized tribes live in Alaska, where the melting sea ice and permafrost are damaging necessary infrastructure and harming communities. Biden believes we have the opportunity to build a more resilient, sustainable economy – one that will put the United States on an irreversible path to achieve net-zero emissions, economy-wide, by no later than 2050. He will partner with tribal nations to get there, identifying and responding to the highest risks of climate change on tribal lands, restoring the use of science and traditional ecological knowledge in planning for and adapting to climate change, and supporting tribal efforts to shift to clean energy production and use. *Read more about Biden’s plans to build a clean energy future at <https://joebiden.com/clean-energy/> and <https://joebiden.com/climate-plan/>.*

INCREASE SAFETY ON TRIBAL LANDS AND TACKLE THE CRISIS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST NATIVE WOMEN, CHILDREN, AND THE ELDERLY

Today, in Native communities, there is an epidemic of violence against women. Native Americans — especially women and children — are more likely to be victims of crimes than the average American. Native youth are up to ten times more likely to be victims of violent crimes than other youth. More than 1 in 2 Native women are subject to sexual violence in their lives, with more than 1 in 7 experiencing it in the past year, and murder is the third leading cause of death of Native women. There are far too many unresolved or unprosecuted cases of missing and murdered indigenous women. To break the cycle of victimization and promote accountability, Biden will partner with tribal leaders and tribal women’s advocates to ensure tribal lands are safe and focus on ending violence against Native women and children and ending the epidemic of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. Biden will take a comprehensive approach, and ensure Native people are at the table, listened to, and part of the solution. As President, Biden will:

- **Reaffirm tribal sovereignty to support women and children and hold offenders accountable.** The Obama-Biden Administration passed the Tribal Law and Order Act (TLOA) of 2010, strengthening tribal self-determination in criminal justice and empowering tribal authorities to better keep their people safe. As President, Biden will reauthorize key parts of this bill that have expired, such as funding support for tribal justice systems and tribal use of federal Bureau of Prisons beds. He also will work with tribal leaders to find long term solutions to address the Supreme Court’s decision in

Oliphant v Suquamish that has prevented tribes from prosecuting non-Indian offenders who commit crimes against Indians on Indian lands. As the original architect of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), Biden fought for tribes' rightful authority to protect Native women from abuse. The Violence Against Women Act reauthorization of 2013 recognized for the first time tribes' inherent power to exercise special criminal jurisdiction over non-Indian offenders who commit domestic violence, dating violence, or violate a protection order on tribal lands. The law expired last year, and even though the House passed a reauthorization, President Trump and Senate Republicans have yet to bring it to a vote and make it law. If it has not become law by the time Biden enters the White House, it will be one of his top legislative priorities. Biden will reaffirm tribal sovereignty and expand the crimes for which tribes can exercise special criminal jurisdiction, including sexual assault, stalking, child violence, and trafficking, through signing into law VAWA 2019. This law will also create a pilot project to help address Alaska's unique challenges in addressing violence against women.

- **Provide support for tribal justice systems.** Biden recognizes the important role that tribal police departments, courts, and victim services agencies play in tribal communities. He will increase funding for the tribal justice systems, and he will also work to increase coordination among law enforcement agencies, so that Native families have access to justice, no matter where they live.
- **Increase data and transparency.** Tribes have limited access to data, making it difficult to improve law enforcement and justice systems so that they can best prevent and address violence and other crimes. As called for in the Indian Law and Order Report, created during the Obama-Biden Administration to help address tribal safety issues, Biden will direct the Department of Justice to produce crime reports for Indian Country and provide the annual reports required by the Tribal Law and Order Act. Biden will also expand enrollment for all tribal law enforcement agencies to participate in the Tribal Access Program, a Department of Justice initiative to provide Native American police with access to national crime information databases and tackle the data gaps fueling the epidemic of missing and murdered Native women and girls outlined under Savanna's Act.
- **Ensure that federal law enforcement prioritizes public safety in Indian Country, with engagement from tribal communities.** Biden will work with tribal leaders and tribal women's advocates to ensure the federal government is providing tribal communities with the resources they need, including ensuring the Federal Bureau of Investigation places additional agents in Indian Country and that each U.S. Attorney office with Indian Country jurisdiction has a point person to coordinate efforts with tribal, state, and local law enforcement to end the epidemic of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. Biden will communicate to U.S. Attorneys that their responsibilities in Indian Country must be a top priority and will ensure that in each jurisdiction the FBI will appoint an ombudsperson to field feedback from tribal communities.
- **Direct the U.S. Department of Justice to fully investigate the epidemic of missing and murdered indigenous women and children.** In addition to taking concrete steps to address the epidemic of missing and murdered indigenous women, he will task his Department of Justice with investigating the epidemic and determining recommendations for addressing this crisis, including identifying communication breakdowns between

governmental agencies and providing adequate resources for Indian tribes to implement tribally-centered responses.

- **Expand federal resources for prevention and survivor support initiatives for Native women and girls.** Biden has laid out a comprehensive plan to expand resources for prevention and survivor support initiatives, ranging from supports like a stronger safety net for survivors including housing and cash assistance to the expansion of advocates and access to lawyers so survivors can get the justice they deserve. He will also work to increase funds to meet the unique needs of tribes by increasing funding set aside for tribes under the Crime Victims Fund established by the Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (VOCA), and expand grants to support targeted, community-driven strategies that include trauma-informed and culturally-specific programs that focus on the development of holistic prevention and intervention services for survivors from Native and other racial and ethnic minority communities. And, he will secure additional funding for VAWA’s college campus grant for Tribal Colleges and Universities and other Minority Serving Institutions and community colleges to enable them to implement culturally and environmentally-specific prevention and survivor support initiatives.
- **Support addiction treatment, mental health services and trauma recovery to break the cycles of crime and victimization.** Biden will renew that commitment to healing and supportive services in Native communities by increasing the availability of addiction treatment, mental health and trauma recovery services, building on the Obama-Biden Administration’s support for the Adult Tribal Healing to Wellness Programs and Juvenile Treatment Drug Court.

EXPAND ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN INDIAN COUNTRY

Tribal Nations have served on the front lines in the fight against persistent poverty and severe economic hardship for generations — nearly one in four Native Americans live in poverty, nearly twice the national average. The pandemic has hit Indian Country especially hard, with over half of all Native Americans working in gaming and other tourism and hospitality industries that have been especially devastated. The Trump Administration only made matters worse by failing to get tribes critical funding for months and making it harder for many tribal small businesses to get relief. As President, Biden will work with tribes to provide the resources and assistance they need to dismantle long-standing economic challenges, including deficient infrastructure, housing instability, unemployment, and insufficient access to capital, and instead create opportunity across Indian Country. He will ensure federal agencies provide support in ways that is most useful for tribes and honors tribal self-determination. Biden will:

Invest in Infrastructure and Clean Energy

Aging infrastructure undermines economic opportunity and physical wellbeing across Indian Country. According to a 2017 report from the National Congress of American Indians, “the number of ‘shovel ready’ infrastructure projects in Indian Country remains too many to count, and many of those have been that way for years if not decades.” As President, Biden will make a historic \$2 trillion investment in modern, sustainable, accessible infrastructure to create millions of jobs and deliver an equitable clean energy future. Biden will **ensure investments in the clean**

energy economy reach tribal lands, including by setting a goal that disadvantaged communities — including Tribal communities — receive 40% of overall benefits. These investments will create good-paying jobs in frontline and fenceline communities. Biden will:

- **Build and repair roads, highways, and bridges in Indian Country.** According to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, the roads in Indian Country are some of the most “underdeveloped, unsafe, and poorly maintained road networks in the nation.” Hundreds of bridges are also in need of repair -- in 2019, almost 1 in 6 bridges in Indian Country were structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.
- **Expand broadband, or wireless broadband via 5G, to every Native American household.** Individuals living on tribal lands are over five times more likely than Americans overall to lack access to adequate broadband (32% vs 6%). As the COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated, reliable internet access can be critical for obtaining health care, education, information, and even employment. Biden will invest \$20 billion in rural broadband infrastructure. He will also work with the FCC to reform its Lifeline program, offering more low-income Americans the subsidies needed to access high-speed internet. *Read more about Biden’s plan at joebiden.com/infrastructure*
- **Ensure clean, safe drinking water and water infrastructure in Indian Country and all communities.** Long-standing water crises continue to undermine public health in Indian Country. Native American households are 19 times more likely as white households to lack sufficient plumbing. This persistent problem has taken on new importance in the wake of COVID-19, as the lack of running water can increase the risk of transmission. Biden will work to ensure adequate, resilient water infrastructure in Indian Country, by making investments in new infrastructure, repair of water pipelines and sewer systems, replacement of lead service pipes, upgrade of treatment plants, and integration of efficiency and water quality monitoring technologies. This includes protecting our watersheds and clean water infrastructure from man-made and natural disasters by conserving and restoring wetlands and developing green infrastructure and natural solutions. Biden will restore strong federal support for Indian water rights settlements and coordinate the actions of all relevant federal agencies to use their programs, authorities, and resources to support tribal water needs and economic development activities. The Obama-Biden Administration settled twelve important water rights settlements, more than any other Administration in history. These settlements supported \$3 billion of investment in Indian Country. *Read Biden’s full infrastructure plans at joebiden.com/infrastructure and joebiden.com/clean-energy.*
- **Invest in housing.** Access to safe, affordable housing is a pervasive challenge in Native American communities around the country. According to a 2017 HUD report, Native Americans in tribal areas are almost five times more likely than Americans overall to endure domestic overcrowding or physical housing problems, such as plumbing, kitchen, or heating deficiencies. College-educated Native families are less likely to own their own homes than white families that never finished high school, contributing to wealth gaps. Even when these families succeed in purchasing their own home, their homes are typically worth much less than the homes of their white counterparts. As President, Biden will:
 - Spur the construction of 1.5 million homes and public housing units in areas where affordable housing is in short supply, including by funding the Indian

Housing Block Grant. He will also work with Congress to reauthorize the Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act (NAHASDA), which authorized the Indian Housing Block Grant and Title VI Loan Guarantee program, which enables Tribes to raise private capital to invest in affordable housing.

- Help families buy their first homes and build wealth by creating a new refundable, advanceable tax credit of up to \$15,000.
- Provide Section 8 housing vouchers to every eligible family so that no one has to pay more than 30% of their income for rental housing, and work with Congress to enact a new renter's tax credit, designed to reduce rent and utilities to 30% of income for low-income individuals and families who may make too much money to qualify for a Section 8 voucher but still struggle to pay their rent.
- Expand housing benefits for first-responders, public school educators, and other public and national service workers who commit to living in persistently impoverished communities or who work in neighborhoods with low affordable housing stock.
- *Read Biden's full housing plan at joebiden.com/housing.*
- **Invest in a 21st century care infrastructure.** More than 60% of Native Americans live in so-called "child care deserts." Biden will make child care more affordable and accessible for Native families by making substantial investments in the country's care infrastructure, including a direct set-aside for tribes. He will also make it easier for Native families with aging relatives and loved ones with disabilities to have quality, affordable home- or community-based care. *Read Biden's full plan for a 21st century caregiving workforce at joebiden.com/caregiving.*

Invest in Native small businesses

In 2017, less than one half of one percent of all small businesses with employees were owned by Native Americans. As President, Biden will launch a historic effort to empower and create Native-owned small businesses and businesses owned by other people of color. He will:

- **Provide Native-owned small businesses and other small businesses with an ambitious "restart package" to survive the current crisis and come out the other side strong.**
- **Increase access to capital for Native-owned businesses.** Biden will create a Small Business Opportunity Fund that leverages more than \$150 billion in new capital and opportunities for Native businesses and other small businesses that have been structurally excluded for generations. This fund will spur more than \$50 billion in additional public-private venture capital funds, including to Indian Country, by dedicating funding to entrepreneurs who create jobs and growth in lower-income areas, including tribal areas, with an emphasis on reaching businesses owned by Native people and other people of color. Biden also will task his Treasury Department with supporting Native Community participation in the New Market Tax Credit and expand access to \$100 billion in low-interest business loans to small businesses, including those owned by Native entrepreneurs, by extending state, local, tribal, and non-profit lending programs with \$20 billion in new capital.

- **Capitalize Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) with increased resources to the Native American CDFI Assistance Program (NACA Program),** which has proven a successful way to increase capital access across Indian Country.
- **Make a historic commitment to equalizing federal procurement so that Native entrepreneurs also benefit from taxpayer dollars.** The Biden-Harris Build Back Better plan includes a historic procurement effort designed to support small businesses and tackle long standing inequities in the federal contracting system. As part of this effort, his multi-pronged small business contracting strategy will include formula-based awards; widespread outreach and counseling to small business owners, especially tribal business owners and other business owners of color; and transparent, frequent monitoring of contract awards. Specifically, Biden will require prime contractors to develop and fully execute plans to increase subcontracting opportunities for small disadvantaged businesses (SDBs), including those owned by Native Americans.
- **Expand long-term technical assistance and federal contracting preferences for small disadvantaged businesses.** Biden will triple the federal goal for contracting with all small disadvantaged businesses from 5% to a minimum of 15% of all federal procurement dollars by 2025. He will increase the 8(a) program’s administrative capacity, encourage greater participation among businesses owned by Native American entrepreneurs, Indian tribes, Native Hawaiian Organizations, and Alaska Native Corporations, streamline the application process, and create a national standard for service delivery. Biden will also extend the maximum length of time that a firm may participate in the program and create a more supportive off-ramp to help graduates transition out. Biden will require public disclosure of program participant demographics to ensure participation is equitable.
- **Strengthen implementation of the Buy Indian Act** within the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Indian Health Service to increase procurement opportunities for Native owned businesses.
- **Employ the resources of the federal government to protect Native artisans.** Arts and crafts are a big economic driver for Indian Country, but too many businesses devalue the livelihood of Native American artists by selling fake Native American art. Biden will call on the U.S. Department of Justice to bring more prosecutions under the Indian Arts and Crafts Act, a federal truth-in-advertising law that prohibits the marketing and sale of products that are inaccurately marketed as an Indian product or Native-produced.

Invest in Native communities

- **Increasing funding for the Indian Community Development Block Grant.** This will help fund tribal efforts to expand affordable housing, improve infrastructure, and increase economic opportunities for low-income individuals and communities.
- **Clean up and protect local economies from the impacts of resource extraction.** Across the country, there are several million unplugged, orphaned, and abandoned oil and gas wells that pose ongoing climate, health, and safety risks in communities. Tribes have been among the most severely impacted communities. In addition to these wells, tens of thousands of former mining sites for extraction of coal, hardrock minerals, and uranium are causing ongoing environmental damage including to local surface and groundwater

supplies. By making an immediate up-front investment, Biden will create more than 250,000 good jobs with a choice to join a union to plug these oil and gas wells and to restore and reclaim these abandoned coal, hardrock, and uranium mines.

- **Meeting obligations to urban Native Americans.** According to the 2010 Census, over half of Native Americans live off reservation. Biden will ensure that we don't leave anyone behind by creating a strategy to support our country's urban Indian populations, ensure that their voices are heard by the federal government, and to fight invisibility of urban Indians across the country. That means ensuring that urban Native American populations have the support they need to access quality health care, culturally relevant education, adequate and affordable housing, and other needed resources. This includes ensuring that Urban Indian Organizations receive 100% Federal Medical Assistance Percentages (FMAP) for Medicaid, just as IHS tribal providers already receive.

Invest in Native agriculture

Native farmers and other farmers of color have long faced barriers to growing their agricultural businesses, including unfair prices, unequal access to government support, retaliation for civil rights complaints, and outright injustice. Under Obama-Biden, the USDA sought to address both the structural and cultural causes of systemic inequality that had in prior generations been reproduced by the policies and practices of the agency. Despite the groundbreaking steps to address inequality that were taken under Obama-Biden, including under the historic Keepseagle settlement, the practices and values of the USDA slid backwards under the authority of the Trump Administration – which ceased many agency-wide efforts to level the playing field. As President, Biden will build upon the historic progress made during the Obama-Biden Administration, and take additional steps to support the rights of Native farmers and other farmers of color by:

- **Establishing an equity commission** that will focus on the unique jurisdictional and regulatory barriers that Native, Black, and Latino farmers, ranchers, and fishers must negotiate and make sure that processes are streamlined and simplified to promote new and beginning farming and ranching operations by Native farmers and other farmers of color. As President, Biden will direct his Department of Agriculture to review the Department's programs – including in conservation, value-added agriculture support, finding new markets, data analysis, fisheries support, climate smart production, risk management, research and delivery of knowledge — and design a plan to ensure they are geared to farmers, ranchers, and fishers who are as different and varied as the landscape of the country.
- **Investing in the infrastructure needed for food production and processing in Indian Country.** Tribes do not have sufficient capital to invest in food production and processing infrastructure, locking them out of tremendous economic opportunities as well as the ability to better provide for local nutritional needs. Biden will invest in the infrastructure needed for food processing, packaging, and storage.
- **Ensuring Native growers and producers benefit from federal assistance.** In addition, Biden recognizes the disadvantage that Native farmers and other farmers of color face when they are forced to compete with other farmers who have decades of privileged

access to federal assistance. As President, he will explore the use of land trusts, cooperative farm operations, and farm credit systems geared towards Native farmers and other farmers of color as a means to support this population and diversify our agricultural sector. And, he will work to ensure that more USDA federal food purchases are made from Native food producers.

- **Advancing a comprehensive effort to assist in both the purchase of farmland and the ability of Native farmers and other farmers of color to keep that land.** This includes credit and technical support in the form of expedited credit, low-interest loans, and technical assistance.

INVEST IN EDUCATION

Native students endure stark inequities in access to education. They have lower public high school graduation rates than any other racial or ethnic group and are least likely to enroll in and graduate from college. COVID-19 is exacerbating education inequities as schools struggle to reopen safely and Native American students, who have less access to broadband, face additional barriers to learning. Biden has laid out a plan to reopen schools safely. And, Biden will invest in Native children from birth, so they are prepared to succeed in tomorrow's economy. He will provide Native educators the support and respect they need and deserve. He will also increase collaboration between the Department of Education and Department of Interior, implement more meaningful and robust consultation with tribes, and encourage states and local education organizations to work collaboratively with tribes to ensure Native voices are heard. Biden will:

- **Ensure access to high-quality, affordable child care and offer universal preschool to three-and four-year olds.** Biden will increase funding to tribes to expand access to quality child care for Native children, and he will work with states and tribes to ensure Native students can access preschool at public schools, including Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools.
- **Invest in public schools, including BIE schools.** Native students are more than five times more likely to attend high-poverty schools than their white counterparts (41% vs. 8%). Biden will triple funding for Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which provides resources for schools to support low income students, and fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), the federal program designed to support children with disabilities. Each of these programs sets aside a portion of the funding for the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools and supports Native students attending public schools. *Read more about Joe Biden's plans to invest in our public schools system at <http://joebiden.com/education>*
- **Invest in improving public school buildings, including public schools operated by Indian tribes and by the BIE.** Biden's infrastructure plan includes a \$100 billion investment in our nation's public schools. The plan includes a set-aside for tribes and will ensure that critical infrastructure needs at tribal schools will be prioritized in this effort.
- **Double the number of psychologists, counselors, nurses, social workers, and other health professionals in our schools so our kids get the mental health care they need.** One in five children in the U.S. — and especially Native American youth — experience mental health problems. Biden will make an unprecedented investment in school mental

health professionals in order to double the number of psychologists, counselors, nurses, social workers, and other health professionals employed in our schools, and partner with Tribal Colleges and Universities and other colleges to expand the pipeline of these professionals.

- **Recruit and retain diverse teachers.** Biden will support more innovative approaches to recruiting Native teachers, including supporting high school students in accessing dual-enrollment classes that give them an edge in teacher preparation programs, helping paraprofessionals work towards their teaching certificate, and working with Tribal Colleges and Universities to recruit and prepare teachers, including providing new funding for Tribal Colleges and Universities to develop graduate programs in education. For the most remote tribal schools, Biden also recognizes that providing adequate teacher housing is an important element of recruitment and retention.
- **Promote Native history and culture in schools.** Native students have better academic outcomes when their school's curriculum includes their tribal language and culture. Biden will increase resources to support incorporation of Native history and culture in public-school curricula, including BIE schools. Biden will protect funding for the Johnson-O'Malley Program, helping localities meet specific needs of their students through programs ranging from cultural preservation to dropout prevention.
- **Invest in Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs).** As President, Biden will take steps to rectify the funding disparities faced by Tribal Colleges so that the United States can benefit from their unique strengths through new new funding for TCUs, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and Minority-serving Institutions (MSIs) to build research incubators, high tech labs and facilities, and digital infrastructure.
- **Increase college completion by making college affordable for Native students.** Fewer than 1 in 5 Native American young adults enroll in college and among those who do enroll, just 39% graduate within six years. Biden will make four-year Tribal Colleges and Universities and public colleges and universities tuition-free for all students whose family incomes are below \$125,000. This will help more than 90% of Native American families afford higher education. Biden will also provide tuition-free access for all students who attend a two-year Tribal College, community college, or other high-quality training program. And he will double the maximum value of Pell Grants.
- **Alleviate student debt burdens.** In 2016, more than three-quarters of Native American graduating seniors had student loan debt. As President, Biden will immediately cancel \$10,000 of federal student loan debt during COVID-19, and forgive all undergraduate tuition-related federal student debt from two- and four-year public colleges, and including Tribal Colleges and Universities, for debt-holders earning up to \$125,000. He will also forgive loan payments for individuals making \$25,000 or less per year; cap loan payments at 5% of discretionary income for those making more; fix the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program; and forgive \$10,000 of undergraduate or graduate student debt for every year of national or community service, up to five years.

MEET OBLIGATIONS TO AND COMMEMORATE NATIVE VETERANS

Native Americans have a long and proud tradition of serving the United States Armed Forces, joining at higher rates than any other demographic group. Biden knows that service members are

not “losers” or “suckers.” They are American heroes, who value duty, honor, and country, and they deserve to be treated with respect. As President, Biden will direct the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to establish a Tribal Advisory Committee to increase collaboration and coordination between the federal government and Tribal Nations. He will also work to:

- **Fully resource the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs** to ensure that our veterans receive the services they need, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or ZIP code. He will also ensure that the Office of Tribal Government Relations is fully staffed and funded and that health care and benefits specific to Native Americans are properly administered. And, Biden will evaluate the existing agreements between the VA and Indian Health Services (IHS) to make sure that Native veterans are receiving the world-class health care they deserve and that their particular needs are being met.
- **End homelessness among Native veterans.** The Obama-Biden Administration cut the population of homeless veterans by almost half. Biden will work with Congress to continue to drive down veteran homelessness by permanently authorizing the Supportive Services for Veteran Families program, which provides critical funding for wrap-around services for those facing homelessness. He will work to expand the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Act to meet the disproportionate number of homeless Native American veterans and require the VA to coordinate state/county systems of veterans services with tribes and their Tribal Veterans Services officers to expand access to services for Native veterans.
- **Expand the Native American Direct Loan Program**, which allows eligible veterans and their families to apply their VA home loan guarantee to federal trust land, to facilitate home ownership and improvements.
- **Demonstrate respect for Native communities** by changing military naming conventions that label enemy-held territory as “Indian Country” and codenames enemy combatants after historic indigenous and tribal figures.

ENSURE NATIVE AMERICANS HAVE THE RIGHT TO VOTE

Voting is the purest, most fundamental act of U.S. citizenship. Native Americans and Alaska Natives have for far too long have been disenfranchised. Biden will not only protect the right of Native Americans to vote, but make it easier to vote. He will:

- Lead the way to restore the Voting Rights Act by enacting the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of 2020 and support the Native American Voting Rights Act.
- Appoint leaders to the Justice Department who will challenge every law designed to suppress the Native vote.
- Establish a first-of-its kind Native American Voting Rights Task Force, ensuring equal access to voter registration and polling sites. It will formulate recommendations to combat the devastating effects of *Shelby County v. Holder* and state actions to restrict Native American voting access, such as states’ failure to accept tribal identification cards as a valid form of voter identification.