



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 4, 2019

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NPA URGES GOV. DUNLEAVY TO INCLUDE VPSO AND MMIWG CRISIS FUNDING IN STATE OPERATING BUDGET

Demanding an end to the lack of public safety and protections for Alaskans and taking a stand for missing and murdered Alaska Native women and children

Anchorage, AK – Native Peoples Action sent two letters to Governor Dunleavy urging him to include funding in the state operating budget for the Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) program and funding to investigate the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Dunleavy's budget is due December 15, 2019. These urgent matters call for direct action and leadership from his administration reflected in this budget and moving forward.

Despite Gov. Dunleavy's stated prioritizing of public safety, VPSO funding was still cut and the state continues to undermine recruitment by rejecting requests from VPSO employers to recruit and retain officers. At the 2019 Alaska Federation of Natives convention in October, Dunleavy and Department of Public Safety (DPS) Commissioner Amanda Price pledged their dedication to public safety and promised to fund VPSOs, yet we are not seeing improvement in public safety that is rightly due for all Alaskans.

Gov. Dunleavy's use of job vacancies and unused funds to justify denying VPSO funding requests is inadequate. The need for funding is dire. For example, the Northwest Arctic Borough, serving 10 Iñupiaq villages, requested \$1,000 in monthly recruitment funding [yet the state approved \\$200](#). This is unacceptable when our communities face high rates of violence parallel with a continued failure or complete absence of a public safety system. We demand a better system that includes working closely with tribal governments to ensure that our state is building up and supporting VPSOs by providing adequate funding and removing barriers that exist to hinder this program such as recruitment and retention problems.

NPA's second letter urges Gov. Dunleavy to include funding in the state operating budget to investigate cases of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) and to continue this funding as long as it is needed. Alaska continues to face some of the highest rates of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in the Nation. The [Urban Indian Health Institute's \(UIHI\) recent study](#) ranks Alaska as the fourth in the nation for the highest number of MMIWG cases. Anchorage is listed as the third highest number of MMIWG cases across the 71 cities included in the UIHI study. The UIHI statistics, lack of available case information provided by state and law enforcement and the continued violence on our Indigenous women and girls is enough to show that the current Alaska state and law enforcement continues to fail to protect Indigenous women and girls. This funding should also include allocated money to the Cold Case Investigation Unit to help bring closure to families of victims. Funding should also be allocated to the Department of Public Safety and Department of Law for necessary resources and ability to work together to address this ongoing crisis.

"The violence against women and children has perpetuated our communities and people for far too long. Enough is enough. More work must be done to protect our mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts, cousins and friends. The violence and harm to our women and children is happening every day. We deserve transparency and accountability from this administration in ending this crisis and ensuring that our women and girls are safe and protected."

Kendra Kloster, NPA Executive Director

One of the main goals of Native Peoples Action is to advocate for the wellness and protection of Alaska Native peoples. We need to hold Governor Dunleavy and his administration accountable for promised protections through proper funding for the livelihood, safety and future of our community members. This administration cannot continue to fail to protect Alaskans. We need partnership across Alaska from the Governor's office to troopers and police, to non-profits, tribal governments and community members in ensuring that solutions are found to make Alaska a safer place for all people to live.

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NATIVE PEOPLES ACTION

is an Alaska Native non-profit organization. We strive to provide Alaska Native peoples, communities, and our traditional values with a voice at all levels of policy making.