



TRIBAL PRIORITIES FOR SOLVING THE CLIMATE CRISIS

The Congressional Action Plan for a Clean Energy Economy and a Healthy, Resilient, and Just America.



Photo Credit: Blue Lake Rancheria

INVEST IN TRIBAL INFRASTRUCTURE TO BUILD A JUST, EQUITABLE, AND RESILIENT CLEAN ENERGY ECONOMY

ENERGY: Many Tribal Nations have poor quality or no power grid connections and have had little decision-making authority over energy infrastructure. Electrical microgrids are one way to address this long-standing issue. For instance, the Blue Lake Rancheria has developed electrical microgrids using solar photovoltaic and battery storage infrastructure. Microgrids can maintain key electrical functions during emergency power blackouts, which are becoming more frequent. Floating off-shore wind technologies are another prospective microgrid power source, as exemplified by the Oregon Coast Energy Alliance Network (OCEAN).

WATER: Tribal water infrastructure is often not adequate in terms of water quality or supply, or maintained due to a lack of funding. Water security is a federal trust responsibility that is a climate change priority for many Tribal Nations and is important for Tribal sovereignty.

TRANSPORTATION: The transportation sector is one of the largest source of energy-related carbon dioxide emissions in the U.S. and is an important opportunity for achieving carbon neutrality. In Tribal communities, the transportation system is often critical for maintaining social-cultural and economic functions. Installation of electric vehicle charging stations, and ensuring transportation systems are resilient to the impacts of flooding and wildfire are Tribal priorities.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS: Broadband internet service is unreliable or cost prohibitive on many Tribal Nations, despite being critical for emergency response, public safety, education, and information exchange. Broadband internet has become an essential communications infrastructure and a foundation for entrepreneurial opportunity.

BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE: Tribal Nations and citizens would benefit from upgrading Tribal homes and businesses to maximize energy efficiency and eliminate emissions. Providing ample funding throughout Indian Country and technical assistance (e.g., to develop building code resolutions) would support this goal. In addition, Tribal Governments have authority to formally pass resolutions to direct compliance with energy efficiency building codes in public buildings, yet may not have capacity to develop these building codes.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

[ATNI Tribal Review of the Congressional Action Plan](#)

Tribal Nations have insufficient infrastructure across the four lifeline sectors (energy, water, transportation, telecommunications). These sectors increasingly are interconnected. The most critical role the federal government can play to support decarbonization for Tribes is through technical assistance and financial support while adhering to the principles of Government-to-Government relationships, Tribal sovereignty, and the federal trust responsibility.

TRIBAL PRIORITIES THAT CONGRESS SHOULD CONSIDER:

>> **Tribal nations have insufficient infrastructure across four primary lifeline sectors:** energy, water, transportation, and telecommunications. These lifeline sectors increasingly interconnect. Examples include: transportation electrification; smart grids involving telecommunications and energy infrastructure. Instances of infrastructural failure increase social-economic disruption. Thus, action to maintain reliable, resilient infrastructure networks is urgent.

>> **Clean energy is the basis for improving all four lifeline sectors:** build zero-carbon infrastructure while ensuring redundancy, reliability, and predictable costs.

>> **The following programs address clean energy improvements:**

- **Direct Treasury/Tribal clean energy revolving loan program.**
>> A revolving loan fund of ~\$10 billion with a simple application and a low interest rate to invest in clean energy infrastructure and capacity-building staff positions (similar to California Energy Commission's Energy Conservation Assistance Act).
- **Provide legal support for Tribal governments to develop a framework for regulatory and jurisdictional control over their energy infrastructure:** related content may include Tribal utility commissions, easements, and rights of way.
- **Funding for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM) education programs and field experiences in clean energy.**
- **Workforce development programs** and transition current jobs for clean energy industries (e.g., wind energy, storage), particularly in rural Tribal areas.

>> **Provide technical assistance for all primary lifeline sectors.** In addition, provide technical assistance to improve energy efficiency of buildings, as well as the adoption of building codes by Tribal governments.

>> **Roads:** Protect existing road networks by upgrading them to make them more resilient to climate impacts.

>> **Oil and gas infrastructure:** In decision making, adhere to the principles of [Free, Prior, and Informed Consent](#) of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and NCAI Resolution #SD-15-024 and Tribal consultation ([Executive Order 13175](#)). Repair infrastructure leaks to reduce environmental impacts.