

## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

## Press Center



## Deputy Secretary Wolin Announces Economic Development Initiatives at White House Tribal Nations Conference

12/5/2012

### *Proposed Initiatives Will Offer Greater Certainty on Tribal Benefits, Improve Access to Capital*

**WASHINGTON** - Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Neal S. Wolin today announced key economic development initiatives that address the unique set of challenges faced by the Native American community. Speaking before leaders from the 566 federally recognized Tribes at the White House Tribal Nations Conference, the Deputy Secretary outlined several Treasury proposals created in consultation with tribal leaders that build upon the Administration's commitment to finding solutions that work for Indian Country.

"The tribal consultation process is an essential part of the dialogue between the federal government and your nations," said Deputy Secretary Wolin. "It allows us to better understand your concerns, your needs, and your circumstances—and to better address them. A key challenge for tribal nations is economic development. Many of your communities face poverty, high unemployment, and a lack of high-paying jobs. That's why, at Treasury and across the government, we are committed to finding solutions that work for the Native American community."

During his remarks, Deputy Secretary Wolin announced new proposed guidance that lays out broad exclusions from income to certain benefits that Indian tribal governments provide to tribal members. Indian tribes have developed a range of programs to address their unique social, cultural, and economic issues and the new guidance seeks to provide certainty on what benefits fall under the general welfare exclusion from income. This includes a wide range of benefits—such as assistance with utility bills, tuition payments, or assistance for the elderly. This guidance was developed in consultation with tribal leaders who helped ensure that it addressed the needs of Indian tribes. The Treasury Department will continue to work closely with tribal leaders finalize this guidance in the months ahead.

To help improve access to capital in native communities, the Deputy Secretary outlined new procedures for the reallocation of Tribal Economic Development Bonds. These bonds are an excellent way to spur development on tribal lands, but they have been difficult to access—many tribes have faced continued difficulty in financial markets since the crisis. Out of the \$2 billion in authority for these bonds under the America Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), \$1.8 billion remains. By updating the reallocation formula and application procedures, Treasury aims to help Indian nations access these bonds to create jobs and growth in their communities.

The Deputy Secretary also renewed a request from Treasury's Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund's Native American Assistance Program, or NACA Program, for comments and feedback on a newly commissioned study. The study will help pinpoint where the needs for investment lie, and how to enhance the NACA Program so that it can provide as much opportunity as possible in Native Communities.

During the conference, Deputy Secretary Wolin also reiterated the value of maintaining a dialogue with native communities, the Treasury Department's recognition of the unique economic challenges facing tribal nations and its commitment to work with each tribe. For more information and updates on the Treasury's work with Indian Country, visit our Tribal resource center: <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/economic-policy/tribal-policy/Pages/Tribal-Policy.aspx>.

###

