

1 percent reduction

# BIA budget focuses on self-improvement

The president's Fiscal Year 1988 budget request of \$985 million for the Bureau of Indian Affairs will enable the BIA to carry out its responsibilities and still hold the line against increased deficit spending, according to Ross Swimmer, assistant secretary for Indian Affairs.

The budget request for the main operating account totals \$910.2 million, about \$11 million less than the current 1987 estimate. It represents a reduction of about 1 percent.

Along with the budget request, the BIA is introducing a series of initiatives to "provide incentives and opportunities for self-improvement of both tribes and individual Indians," Swimmer said.

"All of the initiatives will strengthen the tribes, enhance self-determination and provide greater opportunity for preservation of Indian culture," he said. "This will move the BIA away from the role of 'provider' to the appropriate role of 'enabler.'"

The four major initiatives include:

- Moving education away from BIA control to local communities.

- An economic self-assistance/self-help program that will reform the general assistance grant program.

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*—Ross Swimmer*

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- Increased assistance to small tribes through revenue sharing.

- Control of drug and alcohol abuse through motivation and rehabilitation.

"These new initiatives are not budget driven, but we are introducing them in the budget process so that we will have the remainder of the current fiscal year to think about them and formulate them into final policy after input from the tribes and from Congress," Swimmer said. "Comments from the tribes and the congressional hearing process will further shape these programs."

Swimmer said the education initiatives focus on the quality of education for Indian children and propose moving the management of BIA schools to the tribal or state school system.

"The Bureau has simply not been doing a good job of educating Indian children," Swimmer said. "Despite

the fact that the Bureau spends more per student in its schools than public and private schools, test scores by McGraw-Hill reveal that by the time BIA students reach the 12th grade, they are over three years below the national norm."

The BIA operates or contracts for the operation of 181 schools in 23 states.

In its post-secondary schools — Haskell Indian Junior College in Lawrence, Kan., Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute in Albuquerque, N.M., and the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, N.M. — the BIA will require students to pay a tuition of about \$850.

Another initiative proposes implementation of an economic self-assistance/self-help program that requires able-bodied recipients of general assistance payments to work

or enter job training programs to receive their grants.

Swimmer said that the initiative would combine the general assistance program, employment assistance and the housing improvement program. The basic mission of the three programs would not change, but would be redirected to encourage and enable self-assistance by Indian individuals.

Small tribes of 150 to 1,500 members would receive direct funding to operate their tribal governments under another initiative. The current small tribes program funded in Fiscal Year '87 at \$2.8 million would be raised in Fiscal Year '88 to \$6.8 million with expanded criteria of eligibility and purpose.

Continued efforts will be made to reduce the use of drugs and alcohol by Indians, with renewed emphasis on motivation and rehabilitation programs, especially through school counseling and construction or rehabilitation of emergency shelters.

Nationally operated programs already proven effective against alcohol and drug abuse will be implemented on the reservations through joint efforts of the BIA and the Indian Health Service.