

**CTS Government Shutdown Talking Points & Phone Scripts**

There are two different messaging tracks available:

1. Collaborative Tone
2. Direct Tone

These materials can be adapted and strengthened by inserting community-specific stories and Tribal Leader perspectives.

### Collaborative Tone: Talking Points

- **Immediate Concern:** Indian Country is deeply concerned by the ongoing government shutdown and its immediate disruption of critical federal services. Any reduction in federal positions serving Indian Country immediately and severely harms Tribal citizens and communities by cutting off critical lifelines we depend on every day. Making these positions subject to reductions in force or furloughs would have catastrophic impacts on the delivery of trust and treaty obligations.
- **Protecting Indian Country:** We strongly urge the White House and OMB to except all Indian Country-serving federal positions and programs across all agencies from furloughs and exempt them from potential reductions in force. In alignment with the President's priorities, these positions provide life-saving services and fulfill legal trust and treaty obligations.
- **Essential Services:** Federal employees working in Indian Country deliver health care, education, housing assistance, policing, and justice services. Interruptions threaten lives, worsen existing challenges, and destabilize Native communities.
- **Local Impact:** Many affected employees are themselves Native community members. Their furlough not only halts essential services but also devastates family incomes and local economies already facing high unemployment.
- **No Disruptions:** Programs and staff serving Indian Country must be deemed essential. Service interruptions in our communities are not an inconvenience – they are dangerous and unacceptable.
- **Cross-Agency Consistency:** These protections must be consistently applied beyond IHS and BIA. Programs serving Indian Country exist in virtually every federal agency and must uniformly be protected during the shutdown.
- **Consequences of Inaction:** Every day without access to services and funding places lives at risk, violates trust and treaty obligations, and erodes trust between the federal government and Tribal Nations.

### Collaborative Draft Phone Script

"Hello, this is [Name], a Tribal leader from [Nation]. I am calling regarding the current government shutdown.

Indian Country is already experiencing devastating impacts. Federal employees who provide critical, life-saving services and funding to our communities have been furloughed, creating immediate risk to our citizens and local economies. Any reduction in force to Indian Country-serving positions would devastate our citizens, harm local economies, and violate trust and treaty obligations.

We urge the White House and OMB to immediately ensure that all Indian Country-serving programs and employees are designated essential and excepted from furloughs and exempt from potential reductions in force – across all federal agencies. This is essential to protect lives

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and to honor the federal government's commitments to Tribal Nations, and is in line with the President's priorities.

Thank you for your continued support of Indian Country."

## Direct Tone: Talking Points

- **Not a Bargaining Chip:** Tribal Nations have already paid for the United States' trust and treaty obligations now owed to us. It is unacceptable that our people and programs are regularly caught in political gridlock. Indian Country must never be treated as a bargaining chip in political battles.
- **Native Lives Cannot Wait:** Shutdowns expose the fragile and underfunded nature of the federal-Tribal relationship. Even programs with forward funding are stretched thin and are impacted by furloughs of supportive staff. Every shutdown inflicts direct and disproportionate harm on Native families, schools, health facilities, and public safety.
- **Solutions Demand Action Now:** The federal government must immediately deem programs and staff serving Indian Country essential during this shutdown. Immediate action is necessary to restore basic services in Native communities.
- **Urgent Request to OMB and Agencies:** During the shutdown, OMB and federal agencies must grant exception apportionments to programs and employees serving Indian Country for the protection of life and property. Anything less directly endangers Native communities and violates federal legal obligations.

## Direct Tone Phone Script

"Hello, this is [Name], a Tribal leader from [Nation]. I am calling regarding the ongoing government shutdown.

The United States' trust and treaty obligations to Tribal Nations, Tribal citizens, and Tribal communities are not optional, nor are they bound by political stalemates. Right now, Native lives are at risk because programs and federal staff serving Indian Country have been shuttered during this shutdown. This is unacceptable.

[Tell a brief story about specific impacts – such as a health program suspension, education interruption, or halted law enforcement services.]

OMB and federal agency leadership must act now. They must:

- Designate Tribal programs and Tribal-serving staff as essential in contingency plans,
- Exempt staff serving Indian Country from furloughs or reductions in force, and
- Secure exception apportionments for programs serving Indian Country so that critical services continue during this shutdown.

This is not negotiable. Fulfilling trust and treaty obligations is the law and consistent with the President's stated priorities. Native families, children, and communities are not bargaining chips. Native lives cannot wait."