



GENTNER DRUMMOND
ATTORNEY GENERAL

February 6, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
2433 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Support Bridge Funding for VOCA Fund

Dear Speaker, Majority Leader, and Minority Leaders,

Through this correspondence, the Attorney General for the State of Oklahoma, the sovereign federal Nations of the Chickasaw, Choctaw, Cherokee, Muscogee, Seminole and Osage (in the cumulative “Oklahoma Tribes”), and the Oklahoma District Attorneys Council hereby urge Congress to provide gap funding to the Crime Victims Fund (“CVF”) to secure baseline crucial services for victims of crime. Failure to safeguard the integrity of the CVF places some of Oklahoma’s most vulnerable non-tribal and tribal citizens at risk.

The enactment of the Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (“VOCA”) created the CVF for the purpose of financially supporting organizations and state and local agencies nationwide to provide resources and services to victims of violent crime.¹ Initially, the CVF was funded with fines assessed to criminal defendants convicted in federal court.² Because the designated funding source has proven insufficient to meet the critical needs of crime victims, the CVF requires additional revenue.

¹ 34 U.S.C.A. §§ 20101 – 11, *amended by* Pub. L. 117-27 (2021).

² *Id.* at § 20101(b).

In 2019, Oklahoma Tribes received a subgrant totaling \$2.61 million³ from the CVF grant awarded to the State of Oklahoma to provide direct services to victims.⁴ This assistance included funding for staff positions such as victim, elder, shelter, and cultural advocates, transitional housing coordinators, and a sexual assault nurse examiner.⁵ Since that time, the CVF disbursements to Oklahoma have rapidly diminished, which has resulted in a steady and significant decrease in funding for Tribes each year. In 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023 funded Tribes received \$1.75 million,⁶ \$1.24 million,⁷ and \$995,571,⁸ and \$406,246⁹ respectively. Thus, the Tribes received a staggering 85% less financial support in 2023 than they did four years prior in 2019 due to the funding inadequacies of the CVF.

In the absence of sufficient funding from the CVF, Oklahoma tribal citizens, especially women, are at heightened risk of being denied essential victim services. It is widely recognized that the rates of violence against Native American women are significantly higher than the rates of violence against non-Native American women.¹⁰

Additionally, a depleted CVF prevents a diverse tribal population from receiving vital victim services and assistance. In 2019, 13 Oklahoma Tribes were awarded CVF grants.¹¹ However in 2023, only five Tribes received funding.¹² The correlation between decreased CVF funding and the reduction of diversity amongst Tribal awards illustrate the significant impact of scarce resources on an increasing number of Tribes who were denied financial support.

We acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of Congress to increase the CVF with the passage of the VOCA Fix Act in 2021, which designated penalties and fines from non-prosecution and deferred prosecution agreements as additional funding sources.¹³ Unfortunately, the measure does not address the immediate needs of victims.¹⁴ In the time necessary for the funds provided by the VOCA Fix Act to adequately replenish the CVF, countless crime victims

³ For purposes of this correspondence, the amounts cited herein only refer to the grants provided to Oklahoma's Tribes through the State of Oklahoma and are not intended to represent any amounts that Tribes may have received by applying for related grants directly through the United States Department of Justice.

⁴ *2019 VOCA Board Meeting Decisions*,

<https://www.ok.gov/dac/documents/VOCA%20Board%20Decisions%20August%20202019.pdf> (last visited Jan. 26, 2024).

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *2020 VOCA Grant Decisions*, <https://www.ok.gov/dac/documents/2020%20VOCA%20Decisions.pdf>.

⁷ *2021 VOCA Board Decisions*,

<https://www.ok.gov/dac/documents/2021%20VOCA%20Board%20Decisions%20for%20Website.pdf> (last visited Jan. 26, 2024).

⁸ District Attorneys Council, *2022 VOCA Awards* (2022).

⁹ *2023 VOCA Awards*, <https://www.ok.gov/dac/documents/2023%20VOCA%20Awards%20for%20Website.pdf> (last visited Jan. 26, 2024).

¹⁰ Department of Justice, *Five Things About Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men*, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/249815.pdf> (last visited Jan. 26, 2024).

¹¹ *2019 VOCA Board Meeting Decisions*,

<https://www.ok.gov/dac/documents/VOCA%20Board%20Decisions%20August%20202019.pdf> (last visited Jan. 26, 2024).

¹² District Attorneys Council, *2022 VOCA Awards* (2022).

¹³ 34 U.S.C. § 20101

¹⁴ See Office for Victims of Crime, *FY 2007 – FY 2024 Crime Victims Fund End of Year Balance as of 11/30/2023*, <https://ovc.ojp.gov/about/crime-victims-fund/fy-2007-2024-cvf-balance.pdf> (last visited Jan. 26, 2024).

will remain underserved and at risk. Therefore, action must be taken in the interim to provide services to those who need it most.

Protecting our citizens is of paramount importance. Therefore, the Attorney General, the signatory Oklahoma Tribes of this letter, and the Oklahoma District Attorneys Council are united in our request for Congress to provide gap funding to the CVF. We appreciate your consideration and prompt attention to this matter.

Respectfully,



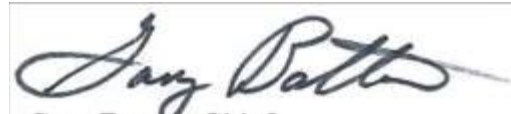
GENTNER DRUMMOND
Oklahoma Attorney General




Bill Anoatubby, Governor
The Chickasaw Nation




Chuck Hoskin Jr.
Principal Chief, Cherokee Nation



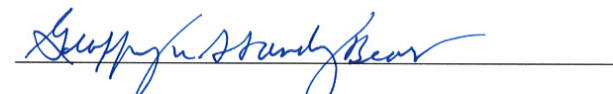
Gary Batton, Chief
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



David W. Hill, Principal Chief
Muscogee (Creek) Nation



Lewis J. Johnson
Chief
Seminole Nation of Oklahoma



Geoffrey M. Standing Bear
Principal Chief of the Osage Nation

Christopher M. Boring
Christopher M. Boring
District Attorney, District 26
District Attorneys Council, Chairman