



## Native American Appointments and Offices

NCAI recommends that President-elect Obama appoint qualified Native individuals to the USDA positions listed below, which may also include elevation or establishment of such positions. These appointments would enhance the government-to-government relationship as well as consultation between tribal governments and the United States, and honor the United States' trust responsibility to provide for the well-being and resources of Native people.

- **Director of Native American Programs.** NCAI recommends that a Native individual be appointed to the position of Director of Native American Programs, presently located in the Office of External and Intergovernmental Affairs. NCAI recommends that President-elect Obama work with Congress to enact legislation to elevate and replace the position to Assistant Secretary for Tribal Affairs, who shall then report directly to the Secretary. In the meantime, NCAI recommends that this position be relocated to the Immediate Office of the Secretary or be redefined as a Deputy Assistant Secretary for Tribal Affairs in the Office of Congressional Relations. This position also requires adequate staffing.
- **Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Directors.** NCAI requests that Native American candidates be considered for appointments as FSA State Directors, particularly in states with significant Native populations.
- **Rural Development (RD) State Directors.** NCAI requests that Native candidates be considered for appointments as RD State Directors, particularly in states with significant Native populations.
- **Establish a Senior Advisor for Tribal Affairs reporting directly to the Under Secretary of Rural Development.** Many USDA RD programs can improve the quality of life for tribal governments and the 36% of Native Americans living in rural areas and having the highest poverty rate of any racial grouping. Among other things, RD programs can address tribal infrastructure for water, electricity, community buildings, telecommunications, and alternative energy. A Senior Advisor for Tribal Affairs will significantly enhance the implementation of RD's mission in Indian Country.
- **Remove inapplicable Tribal programs from the Office of Civil Rights to the Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs.** Tribal governments are among other things, unique political entities with attributes of sovereignty and with a government to government relationship with the federal government. These political characteristics often do not fit appropriately in the civil rights context. NCAI requests that USDA develop and implement a plan in consultation with tribes, to move those tribal programs not compatible with the mission of the Office of Civil Rights, to the Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs.