

At the Urging of U.S. Senator Tina Smith, Congress Approves \$20 Million to Provide Nutrition Services to Native Elders During COVID-19 Pandemic

Emergency Funding in CARES Act Will Support Nutrition Services, Including Food Delivery, so Native Elders Can Stay Safely at Home During Pandemic

WASHINGTON, D.C. [04/08/20] - U.S. Senator Tina Smith (D-Minn.) - a member of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee - says that Congress heeded her call to ensure Native elders continue to have nutrition assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) includes \$20 million in emergency funding for Native elder nutrition programs.

Sen. Smith fought for emergency funding so that Tribal organizations can continue to provide these essential services, which may include meal assembly and delivery, nutrition counseling, nutrition education, farmers market operations, supporting food banks, charitable organizations/food distribution centers, and more.

Sen. Smith said that Bois Forte Band of Chippewa, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, Lower Sioux Indian Community, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians, White Earth Reservation Tribal Council are expected to receive funding.

"I fought for this emergency funding because now, more than ever, it's critical that Native elders in Minnesota and across the country can count on nutrition services," said Sen. Smith. "This assistance will help make it possible for Tribal organizations to continue in-home food delivery and other nutrition assistance as Native elders stay safe and healthy in the comfort of their homes during the pandemic."

You can access emergency funding awards [here](#).

Sen. Smith has long been fighting to keep these services available for Native elders. Last year, Sen. Smith worked with Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) to get measures from their bipartisan Strengthening Services for Native Elders Act included in the Older Americans Act. These provisions became law in March, 2020, and will help Tribal organizations provide a wider range of home and community-based health services to American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) elders, including nutrition services, transportation, case management, and health and wellness programs.

In response to the COVID-19 public health emergency, Sen. Smith introduced the Supplemental Services for Native Elders Act, to make sure that these vital services can continue as more Minnesotans and Native elders around the country stay at home. Sen. Smith fought to get this emergency funding included in the recently enacted bipartisan stimulus package.

Provisions from Sen. Smith's Older Americans Social Isolation and Loneliness Prevention Act were also passed into law as part of the Older Americans Act. Her legislation addresses the negative mental and physical health effects-and the economic consequences-of social isolation among seniors.