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Media contact: Annika Shamachar, [annika.shamachar@berlinrosen.com](mailto:annika.shamachar@berlinrosen.com)

## Tribal Drinking Water Advocates Applaud White House for New Commitments to Clean Water Access

*The Initiative on Universal Access to Clean Water hailed the White House announcement as critical to addressing long-standing inequities in water access for Tribal communities*

**Washington, DC** - Today, advocates with the Initiative on [Universal Access to Clean Water for Tribal Communities](#) celebrated new federal commitments and investments in Tribal drinking water access from the Biden Administration, announced today at the White House Water Summit. As part of a series of Earth Week announcements on freshwater resources, Biden Administration officials reiterated their goal that every person in the country have access to clean drinking water and announced more than \$1 billion in funding as part of President Biden's Investing in America agenda, using funds made available through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).

The billion-dollar funding commitment accompanies a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Indian Health Service (IHS) and the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) and will aim to connect Tribal communities across the United States to clean drinking water and address persistent disparities in water access for Native American households. This transformative investment will create critical planning, design, and construction for community sanitation infrastructure projects in Tribal communities.

“The announcement today demonstrates the Biden Administration’s historic commitment to ensuring that Tribal communities are guaranteed their basic right to clean drinking water,” said **Heather Tanana**, Initiative Lead with the Universal Access Initiative, Visiting Professor at the University of California, Irvine and citizen of the Navajo Nation. “For far too long, the federal government has ignored the stark disparities in water access plaguing Tribal communities, and with the whole of government approach directed by the White House, these investments will go a long way toward correcting those inequities.”

The announcement follows the Western States Water Council’s recent [resolution](#) in support of Universal Access to Reliable, Clean Water for Federally Recognized Indian Tribes, which recognized the water challenges many Tribes face, asserted that water settlement is not a precondition to providing clean drinking water, and called on the federal government to take action in collaboration with Tribal communities. Nearly half of all Tribal households do not have access to reliable, clean drinking water or adequate sanitation, and are significantly more likely than non-Native households to completely lack indoor plumbing.

“We thank the Biden Administration for their commitment to universal access to clean water for Tribes. In order to realize the commitments made today, we suggest that Administration officials

establish numerical goals and appropriate deadlines for achieving water security for Native American families,” said **Dr. Sarah E. Abney**, the Water Resources Program Manager for the Hopi Tribe. “These common-sense measures will ensure transparency and accountability as we work together to bring clean water to the Tribal communities who need it.”

“Today’s funding announcement is a welcome acknowledgment of the crisis-level disparities in clean water access for Tribal communities and a meaningful commitment toward addressing these problems,” said **Daryl Vigil**, Co-Facilitator of the Colorado River Water and Tribes Initiative and former Water Administrator for the Jicarilla Apache Nation. “We urge the federal government to make the most of this investment by working with Tribal community stakeholders to meet their stated commitments.”

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*The initiative on Universal Access to Clean Water for Tribal Communities is a project originally launched by the Water & Tribes Initiative | Colorado River, and staffed by a small group of committed water professionals, passionate in their quest for equity and a basic level of service and quality of life for Native Americans.*